SCENES

FROM

THE RAMAYAN

ETC.

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"The history and the philosophy of antiquity are invaluable, and could ill be spared; but its poetry is what makes the ancient world near of kin to us, and is that by which we feel that the men of old were bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The poetry of a race is what redeems it from perishing as a race, and immortalizes not only the individual poet, but the men who first loved his song and were gladdened by it. This is what binds together the hearts of the ancient and modern worlds."

Saturday Review.

TO MY DEAR FRIEND

S. A. H.

I inscribe this little book.

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PREFACE.

There are two recensions of the Ramayan, one belonging to Benares and the North-West of India, the other to Bengal proper. Two books out of the seven of which the latter consists, were published with an English prose translation in 1806 and 1810 by Carey and Marshman, the venerable Missionaries of Serampore. Two books of the Benares recension, with an excellent Latin translation of the first book and part of the second, were published in 1829 by Augustus William von Schlegel. A magnificent edition of the Bengal recension, with an accurate and elegant translation into Italian, has since been brought out, under royal auspices, by Signor Gorresio of Turin, and a French translation of this edition has been published by M. Hippolyte Fauche. There is an excellent article on the Ramayan in the Westminster Review, Vol. L., and another full of interest-

ing information on the same subject in the forty-fifth Number of the Calcutta Review. Professor Williams's "Indian Epic Poetry" gives a full analysis of the poem with several metrical specimens, and Mrs. Speir in "Life in Ancient India," and Mlle. Clarisse Bader in "La Femme dans L'Inde Antique" have written lovingly and gracefully upon the great work of Valmiki. To these authorities (and to Mr. Talboys Wheeler's second volume of his history of India) the reader is referred for the results of European criticism upon the poem and for the opinions formed of it in the West by those who have become acquainted with the great poem of the Hindus either in the original or by means of translation. Here, instead of an introduction of my own, I offer what I think will be more interesting, some remarks by Baboo Pramadadas Mittra, an orthodox Hindu, formerly my pupil and now my esteemed colleague.

"The Ramayan is the oldest and most glorious

poem of India, and its author, the saint Valmiki, who is consequently called *Adi-kavi* or the Father of poetry, is held in the greatest veneration. "I adore that *kokila*—Valmiki, who mounted on the branch of poesy, warbles in honeyed accents 'Rama' and 'Rama' and 'Rama' again"—this is a literal rendering of the stanza of salutation, composed by an unknown author, which prefaces every manuscript of the poem and genuinely breathes the feelings with which the Hindu regards this holy bard. The account given in the beginning of the poem of the incidents which led to its composition beautifully harmonizes with the main composition and touchingly shows how exquisitely tender and pure was that saintly heart which breathed forth a poem unrivalled perhaps in the world for its pathos and moral purity. One day the saint accompanied by his disciple resorted to the holy stream Tamasa and finding the waters pure as the heart of the good asked his disciple to fetch his garment of bark. He put it on, and descended into the

stream, performed his ablutions and muttered his prayers. Afterwards while roving amidst the woods situated on the banks of the sacred river, he saw a couple of herons wandering secure. On a sudden the male was shot dead by a fowler, and the female, tossing herself about in the air, screamed out most pitifully her lamentations. At this act of cruelty, the grief of the holy saint burst forth in the exclamation :

मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वतीः समाः ।
यत्क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम् ॥

'Never for endless years, O forester, shalt thou obtain rest, as thou hast killed one of the loving couple of herons.'[1]

He was struck with the rhythm of the sentence he had almost unconsciously uttered ; he brooded over it and the piteous event which called it forth. As he

[1] Or, to versify in the metre of the original, excepting the rhyme :

'No rest for ever-circling years, mayst thou, O forester, obtain.
By whose fell hand this harmless bird, while sporting with his mate, was slain.'

was seated in this mood of meditation and tenderness, Brahma himself, the creator of the world, appeared, as it is said, before him, exhorted him to sing the deeds of the glorious hero Rama in the metre in which his tenderness had expressed itself, and inspired him with the knowledge of his whole history, in all its particulars whether hidden or public, the divine saint Narada having already introduced him to it by a relation of the main events. This account which is now contained in the introductory portion of the poem itself was perhaps originally preserved separately by tradition.

Valmiki, who was contemporary with his hero, began to compose his poem when Rama had ascended his paternal throne, having returned from the woods, with his Sita restored.

To write a criticism on the poetry of the Ramayan nicely discerning and aptly delineating the vari-

ous beauties is a task requiring an ability far more than I can lay claim to. I will therefore simply express the general feelings which its perusal excites in every Hindu of true sensibility. No where else, I believe, are poetry and morality so charmingly united—each elevating the other—as in the pages of this really holy poem. There are indeed many poetical compositions—nay almost all good poetry is such—as forcibly teach us some moral truths, but the Ramayan is the only poem which inspires our breasts with a love of goodness in the entire sense of the word. We rise from its perusal with a loftier idea of almost all the virtues that can adorn man—of truth, of filial piety, of paternal love, of female chastity and devotion, of a husband's faithfulness and love, of fraternal affection, of meekness, of forgiveness, of fortitude, of universal benevolence. What, for instance, can excite a greater reverence of Divine Truth than the perusal of that scene where Dasaratha parts with his beloved son for her sake and at last

sacrifices his life for her? What can more impressively teach us filial love than the conduct of Rama giving up his domestic felicity, his kingdom, to preserve his father's vow? Well may the Ramayan challenge the literature of every age and country to produce a poem that can boast of such perfect characters as a Rama and a Sita.

The loftiness of its moral tone, though a high one, is not the only recommendation of the poem. It is true, in several places, it is mere prosaic narration, yet there is an ample profusion in it of true poetry—glowing delineations of human passions, delicate paintings of natural beauties, and magnificent descriptions of battle-scenes."

In the "Scenes" now offered to the public something like a connected story of the hero's adventures is given from his birth to the loss of Sita: the remainder of the story including the Siege of Lanka,

the Defeat of Ravan, and the happy recovery of Sita, may, perhaps, follow. The "Birth of Rama," I should observe, is not from the Ramayan, but from the Raghuvansa of the later poet Kalidasa.

The chief characteristic of the Ramayan being simplicity, I have not attempted to give my lines a polish which would lessen their resemblance to the original, and I have endeavoured rather to be faithful to the spirit of my author and, if possible, to be readable, than to translate as closely as I might have done.

The Messenger Cloud is the work of Kalidasa, the poet of sweet Sakontala. If Professor H. H. Wilson's graceful version of this little poem had been easily accessible to the general reader I should not have attempted my paraphrase.

Most of the pieces now published in a collective form have appeared in the *Pandit*, the Benares Col-

lege Journal of Sanskrit literature : the "Hermit's Son" is reprinted, with a few alterations, from "Specimens of Old Indian Poetry."

BENARES :
July 17*th* 1868.

A few slight alterations have been made in this edition, and the following pieces have been added, SITA IN PRISON, RAMA IN THE SPRING, TIDINGS OF SITA, RAVAN'S PALACE, THE OMENS, RAVAN DEAD, SITA DISGRACED, HOME, THE DESCENT OF GANGA, TARA'S LAMENT, AND INGRATITUDE.

BENARES COLLEGE :
January 1870.

AYODHYA.[1]

"Nons sommes dans Ayodhya, le séjour des princes de la dynastie solaire. Dasaratha règne. Nous sommes en plein âge d'or, et en lisant les curieuses descriptions de la royale cité, on se fait une haute idée de la civilisation de l'Inde, dans un siècle antérieur à celui de Salomon."—MLLE. CLARISSE BADER, *La Femme dans l'Inde Antique.*

ON pleasant Sarju's[2] fertile side
There lies a rich domain,
With countless herds of cattle thronged,
And gay with golden grain.
There, built by Manu,[3] Prince of men,
That saint by all revered,

[1] The ruins of the ancient capital of Rama and the Children of the Sun may still be traced in the present Ajudhya, near Fyzabad. Ajudhya is the Jerusalem or Mecca of the Hindus.

[2] The Sarju or Ghagra, anciently called Sarayu, rises in the Himalayas, and after flowing through the province of Oudh falls into the Ganges.

[3] This Manu was the first prince of the Solar dynasty :
"First Manu reigned, revered by every sage."—*Raghuvansa I.* 16.

Ayodhya, famed through every land,
Her stately towers upreared.
Her vast extent, her structures high,
With every beauty deckt,
Like Indra's city,[1] showed the skill
Of godlike architect.
Or like a bright creation sprung
From limner's magic art,
She seemed too beautiful for stone:
So fair was èvery part.
Twelve leagues the queenly city lay
Down the broad river's side,
And, guarded well with moat and wall,
The foeman's power defied.
Her ample streets were nobly planned,
And streams of water flowed
To keep the fragrant blossoms fresh,
That strewed her royal road.
There many a princely palace stood
In line on level ground;

[1] Indra is the Hindu Jove. The name of his celestial city is Amaravati.

Here temple, and triumphal arc,
And rampart banner-crowned.
There gilded turrets rose on high
Above the waving green
Of mango-groves, and bloomy trees,
And flowery knots between.
On battlement and gilded spire
The pennon waved in state ;
And warders, with the ready bow,
Kept watch at every gate.
She shone a very mine of gems,
The throne of Fortune's Queen :
So many-hued her gay parterres,
So bright her fountains' sheen.
Her pleasure-grounds were filled at eve
With many a happy throng,
And ever echoed with the sound
Of merry feast and song.
For meat and drink of noblest sort
In plenty there were stored :
And all enjoyed their share of wealth,
Nor heaped the miser's hoard.

At morn the blossom-scented air
The clouds of incense stirred,
And blended with the wreath's perfume
The sweet fresh smell of curd.
Streamed through her streets, in endless line,
Slow wain and flying car:
Horse, elephant, and merchant train,
And envoys from afar.
Her ample arsenals were filled
With sword, and club, and mace:
And wondrous engines, dealing death,[1]
Within her towers had place.
Nor there unknown the peaceful arts
That youthful souls entrance,
Of player, minstrel, mime, and bard,
And girls that weave the dance.
There rose to heaven the Veda-chant,
Here blent the lyre and lute:
There rang the stalwart archer's string,
Here softly breathed the flute.

[1] The *śataghnî, i. e. centicide*, or slayer of a hundred, is generally supposed, says Wilson, to be a sort of fire-arms, or the ancient Indian rocket; but it is also described as a stone set round with iron spikes.

The swiftest horses whirled her cars,
Of noblest form and breed:
Vanayu's[1] mare that mocked the wind,
And Vahli's[2] fiery steed.
There elephants, that once had roamed
On Vindhya's mountains, vied
With monsters from the bosky dells
That shag Himalaya's side.
The best of Brahmans, gathered there,
The flame of worship fed;
And, versed in all the Vedas' lore,
Their lives of virtue led.
By penance, charity, and truth,
They kept each sense controlled,
And giving freely of their store
Rivalled the saints of old.
Her dames were peerless for the charm
Of figure, voice, and face:
For lovely modesty and truth,
And woman's gentle grace.

[1] The situation of Vanayu is not exactly determined: it seems to have lain to the North-West of India.

[2] Vahli, or Vahlika, is the modern Balkh.

Their husbands, loyal, wise, and kind,
    Were heroes in the field,
And sternly battling with the foe,
    Could die, but never yield.
The poorest man was richly blest
    With knowledge, wit, and health;
Each lived contented with his own,
    Nor envied other's wealth.
All scorned to lie: no miser there
    His buried silver stored:
The braggart and the boast were shunned,
    The slanderous tongue abhorred.
Each kept his high observances,
    And loved one faithful spouse;
And troops of happy children crowned,
    With fruit, their holy vows.

RAVAN DOOMED.

"Lanka, or Ceylon, had fallen under the dominion of a prince named Ravan, who was a demon of such power that by dint of penance he had extorted from the God Brahma a promise that no immortal should destroy him. Such a promise was as relentless as the Greek Fate, from which Jove himself could not escape; and Ravan, now deeming himself invulnerable, gave up asceticism and tyrannized over the whole of southern India. At length even the Gods in heaven were distressed at the destruction of holiness and oppression of virtue consequent upon Ravan's tyrannies; and they called a council in the mansion of Brahma, to consider how the earth could be relieved from such a fiend."—MRS. SPEIR, *Life in Ancient India.*

Thus to the Lord by whom the worlds were made,
The Gods of Heaven in full assembly prayed:
'O Brahma, mighty by thy tendered grace
Fierce Ravan, leader of the giant race,
Torments the Gods, too feeble to withstand
The ceaseless fury of his heavy hand.

From thee well pleased, he gained in days of old
That saving gift by which he waxes bold;
And we, obedient to that high behest,
Bear all his outrage, patient and opprest.
He scourges—impious fiend—earth, hell, and sky;
And Indra, lord of Gods, would fain defy.
Mad with thy boon, he vexes in his rage
Fiend, angel, seraph, Brahman, saint, and sage.
From him the Sun restrains his wonted glow,
Nor dares the Wind upon his face to blow;
And Ocean, necklaced with the wandering wave,
Stills the wild waters till they cease to rave.
O Father, lend us thine avenging aid,
And slay this fiend, for we are sore afraid.'

They ceased. Then pondering in his secret mind,
'One way,' He said, 'to stay this scourge, I find.
Once, at his prayer, I swore his life to guard
From God and angel, fiend, and heavenly bard:
But the proud giant, in o'erweening scorn,
Recked not of mortal foe, of woman born.

Man, only man, this hideous pest may slay:
None else can take his charmed life away.'

When Brahma's speech the Gods and sages heard,
Their fainting souls with hope reviving stirred.
Then, crowned with glory like a mighty flame,
Lord Vishnu timely to the council came:
Shell, mace, and discus in his hands he bore,
And royal raiment, tinged with gold, he wore.
Hailed by the Gods, most glorious to behold,
With shining armlets, forged of burnisht gold,
He rode his eagle through the reverent crowd,
Like the Sun borne upon a darksome cloud.
Lost in deep thought he stood by Brahma's side,
While all the Immortals praised his name, and cried:

'O Vishnu, Lord divine, thine aid we crave,
Friend of the worlds, the ruined worlds to save.
Divide thy godhead, Lord, and for the sake
Of Gods and men man's nature on thee take.[1]

[1] *Cp.* Paradise Lost. Book III. 281.
"Their nature also to thy nature join,
And be thyself man among men on earth."

Shrined in the bodies of four children, spring
From the three wives of fair Ayodhya's King:
High rank with saints that godly prince may claim,
And those sweet queens, with Beauty, Grace, and Fame.
Assume man's nature thus, and slay in fight
This common scourge, who laughs at heavenly might:
The giant Ravan who, in senseless pride,
Has, trusting to his own right arm, defied
The hosts of Heaven, and ever plagues with woe
Seraphs and Gods above and men below.
Crusht are the Blest, who roam through Nandan's[1] shade,
The saint, the seraph, and the heavenly maid.
We, with the sages, Lord, to thee draw nigh,
And crave thy succour that the fiend may die.
Angel and chorister before thee bow:
Our surest hope, O conquering Lord, art thou.
Arise, O King, regard the world below,
And slay in fight the Gods' tremendous foe.'

Thus prayed the Children of the Sky; the lord
Supreme of Gods, by all the worlds adored,

[1] Indra's celestial garden.

Thus to the suppliants in answer spake :
'Fear not, ye Sons of Heaven, but comfort take ;
Ravan, your terror, by this hand shall fall,
With son and grandson, lord and captain ; all
His friends and counsellors, his kith and kin,
Shall share his ruin as they share his sin.
Thus will I triumph o'er the foe, and then
Dwelling as man among the sons of men,
The while ten thousand seasons roll away,
Will guard the earth with mine imperial sway.'

Then nymph and angel, and the minstrel throng
With heavenly voices raised their choral song :[1]
And all the region, filled with music, rang
With lauds to Madhu's[2] victor, while they sang :
'Go forth and fight, and strike the monster dead,
The scourge of saints, immortal Indra's dread ;

[1] *Cp.* Paradise Lost. Book III. 344.
"No sooner had the Almighty ceased, but all
The multitude of angels, with a shout
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy, Heaven rung
With jubilee, and loud Hosannas filled
The eternal regions."

[2] Madhu was a Daitya or demon slain by Vishnu.

The fell fiend Ravan, ravener[1] abhorred;
Slay him, and all his race, avenging Lord!
Then turn triumphant to thine home on high,
And reign for ever in the ransomed sky.'

[1] *Virâvaṇam râvaṇam.* Literally Ravan who causes weeping.

For a similar play upon the word *cp.* Paradise Regained:
"And saw the *ravens* with their horned beaks
Food to Elijah bringing, even and morn,
Though *ravenous*, taught to abstain from what they brought."

THE BIRTH OF RAMA.

" The scene changes to earth, where Dasaratha, King of Ayodhya, after a life spent in deeds of virtue, finds his years drawing to a close without any heir to defend his old age or succeed to his crown. A holy *rishi*, or saint, reveals to him that he shall obtain his desires, on performing the ***Aswamedha***, or sacrifice of a horse, which occupies such a pre-eminent place in the Hindu religious rites. The sacrifice is accordingly performed, and with the promised result. Dasaratha's three wives become the mothers of four sons, all participating in the divine nature of Vishnu; but Rama, the eldest, is Vishnu himself."—*Westminister Review. October* 1848. p. 41.

With costly sacrifice, with praise, and prayer,
Ayodhya's King had claimed from Heaven an heir ;
When from the shrine, where burnt the holy flame,
Scaring the priests, a glorious angel came,
With arms that trembled as they scarce could hold
A flood of nectar in a vase of gold :

A weight too vast for even him to bear,
For Vishnu's self, the first of Gods, was there.
With reverent awe the Lord of Kosal's land[1]
Received the nectar from the angel's hand,
As erst Lord Indra from the milky wave
Took the sweet drink that troubled Ocean gave.[2]

Soon as the queens had shared that mystic bowl,
Hope, sure and stedfast, filled each lady's soul.
They saw, in dreams, a glorious host who kept
Their watch around them, as they sweetly slept.
They mounted skyward on the Feathered King,[3]
Who spread a glory with each golden wing,
And as he shot through plains of ether drew
The cloudy rack to follow where he flew.
Now Lakshmi,[4] with her consort's mystic gem

[1] Kosala was the name of the kingdom of which Ayodhya was the capital.

[2] The *Amrit,* or nectar of the Indian Gods, buried at the Deluge and recovered at the *Churning of the Ocean.* The story is told in the *Mahábhárata* and translated in *Specimens of old Indian Poetry.*

[3] The sacred bird of Vishnu, Garuda by name.

[4] Lakshmi, Goddess of Beauty and Fortune, was the wife of Vishnu. The mystic gem is called Kaustubha:

"the best
Of gems, that burns with living light
Upon Lord Vishnu's breast."

Sparkling upon her breast, for love of them
Came from the skies, and her own radiant hand
Their slumbering eyelids with a lotus fanned.
Then from their homes on high—their holy hair
Damp from the lucid stream that wanders there—
Came, in a glorious dream, the star-throned Seven,[1]
Whispering softly of the Lord of Heaven.

Proud waxed the Monarch, as each happy queen
Told the bright visions that her eyes had seen :
No king, he deemed, with him in bliss could vie ;
No, nor the Father of the earth and sky.
As many a river lends its silver breast
Where the calm image of the moon may rest,
So in the bosom of each lady lay
That God divided, who is one for aye.
Soon, like the luminous herb, which, ere 'tis night,
Wins from the setting sun a ray of light,[2]

[1] The seven great saints who are the stars of the constellation of Ursa Major. "The seven great saints who star the northern sky." *Birth of the War-God.*

[2] The setting sun, say the Indian poets, deposits a portion of his light with certain plants which emit luminous rays in his absence,

"Like gems, in darkness, issuing rays
They've treasured from the sun that's set."—*Lalla Rookh.*

Kausalya[1] gained a child, a lovely star,
To chase the shadow of the night afar:
A babe so bright, that every torch grew dim
In the Queen's chamber, when it shone near him.
They named him Rama,[2] for the child shall bring
Eternal joy to all who hail him King.
Then the young mother, languid, pale, and worn,
Looked, as she nursed her babe, her newly born,
Like Ganga by the autumn heat opprest,
With one sweet lotus on her island-breast.
And Queen Kaikeyi bare a noble child,
Named Bharat, beautiful, and meek, and mild:
By fond affection and obedience, sent
To be his mother's pride and ornament:
Like gentle modesty that lends new grace
To each dear winning charm of Beauty's face.
Then Queen Sumitra, fairest of the fair,
Twin children, Lakshman and Satrughna, bare:
Thus self-control and knowledge spring to light,
When fruitful learning is employed aright.

[1] Kausalya was chief of the three queens of Dasaratha.

[2] Rama is derived from the root *Ram* to sport, take pleasure.

The babes were born : then sin and sorrow fled,
And joy and virtue reigned supreme instead :
For Vishnu's self disdained not mortal birth,
And Heaven came with him as he came to earth.
Once more the regions, where each guardian lord
Had quailed before the giant he abhorred,
Were cheered with breezes pure from dust and stain,
And freed from terror hailed a gentler reign.
The fire was dimmed by cloudy smoke no more,
And the sun shone untroubled as before.
But Ravan's Glory poured her sorrows down
In jewels dropping from the giant's crown ;
While drums of triumph beaten in the sky
Woke the King's music to a glad reply.
And the first rite to bless the joyful hour
Was the rich down-pour of a fragrant shower
Of blossoms falling, from the heavenly trees,
On the proud monarch's gilded galleries.

Graced with the holy rites, and nursed with care,
As the babes strengthened, fairer and more fair,

So with their growth increased their father's joy—
An elder brother to each darling boy.
Modest by nature, gentle nurture's aid
More modest still the youthful princes made :
Thus, when the sacred oil its influence lends,
In brighter spires the hallowed flame ascends.
With virtues blent in sweet accord to grace
The ancient line of Raghu's[1] sinless race :
As all the seasons of the year combine
To deck the garden where the Gods recline :
They loved as brothers in their royal home,
But still in pairs they ever chose to roam.
Rama and Lakshman closer ties allied;
And Bharat wandered by Satrughna's side,
Linkt in eternal love, like wind and fire,
Or the dear Moon and Sea his foster-sire.[2]
As when, at summer's close, dark clouds arise,
Bringing sweet comfort to men's longing eyes,

[1] Raghu, the great-grandfather of Rama was one of the most celebrated of the Solar dynasty and has given his name to the family.

[2] At the *Churning of the Ocean* the moon with other buried treasures was recovered from the Ocean, by whom, therefore, it is still regarded with parental affection.

So the fair children won the people's hearts
By gentle graces and attractive arts:
Men deemed that Duty, Profit, Love, and Bliss
Had come incarnate from their world to this.
And with more pride the father's bosom glowed
For the rare virtues and the love they showed,
Than for the pearls, in countless tribute poured
By the four oceans, to delight their lord.

THE HEIR APPARENT.

"Dasaratha now made preparations for the public acknowledgment of Rama as destined to be the next king in regular succession, and as permitted during his father's lifetime to share with him the honours and fatigues of royalty."—MRS. SPEIR, *Life in Ancient India.*

But best and noblest of the noble four,
Good as the God whom all the worlds adore,
Lord of all virtues, by no stain defiled,
The King's chief glory was his eldest child.
For he was gallant, beautiful, and strong,
Void of all envy and the thought of wrong.
With gentle grace to man and child he spoke,
Nor could the churl his harsh reply provoke.
He paid due honour to the good and sage,
Renowned for virtue and revered for age ;

And when at eve his warlike task was o'er
He sat and listened to their peaceful lore.
Just, pure, and prudent, full of tender ruth,
The foe of falsehood and the friend of truth;
Kind, slow to anger, prompt at misery's call,
He loved the people and was loved of all.
Proud of the duties of his Warrior race,
His soul was worthy of his princely place,
Resolved to win, by many a glorious deed,
Throned with the Gods in Heaven, a priceless meed.
What though Brihaspati[1] might hardly vie
With him in eloquence and quick reply,
None heard the music of his sweet lips flow
In idle wrangling or for empty show.
He shunned no toils that student's life befit,
But learned the Vedas and all Holy Writ;
And e'en eclipsed his father's archer fame,
So swift his arrow and so sure his aim.

Then rose a longing in the Monarch's breast:
'O that the Gods would take me to their rest!

[1] The Preceptor of the Gods.

Might I but see, ere yet my course be run,
The hallowed waters poured upon my son :
See in mine age, a worthy heir, mine own
Beloved Rama on Ayodhya's throne !'
Then with his friends he counselled that his heir
Should ease his burthen and divide the care.
For, old and worn, he felt that death was nigh,
And dark signs threatened both in earth and sky.
But still he quailed not, for he knew how dear
All held Prince Rama, and this banisht fear.

Forthwith he summoned, for the solemn day,
People and princes near and far away.
They came : and splendid in his king's attire
He looked upon them, as the Eternal Sire,
In all the glory of a God arrayed,
Gazes upon the creatures he has made.

Like heavenly music, very sweet and loud,
Thus spake the Monarch to the gathered crowd :
'Needs not for me, ye noble lords, to show,
How like fond fathers, as full well ye know,

The ancient monarchs of our famous line
Have ruled this mighty realm which now is mine.
Their glorious steps forbade my feet to stray,
And I have laboured, with a loving sway,
'Neath the white canopy's imperial shade,[1]
Till strength is vanisht and my health decayed,
To bless my people, if they have been blest.
And now my weary spirit longs for rest ;
For many thousand years have o'er me flown,[2]
And many generations round me grown
And past away. No longer can I bear
The ruler's labour and the judge's care,
The royal power and dignity, a weight
Too vast but for the young and temperate.
I long to rest, mine anxious labour done,
And on the throne to set my darling son.
For all the virtues lent to me adorn
Rama my dearest and my eldest born.

[1] The white umbrella was one of the insignia of royalty.

The ancient kings of India enjoyed lives of more than patriarchal length :
"While thus, as Indra reigns above the sky,
He ruled the earth, ten thousand years flew by."
Raghuvansa. X. 1.

Ye have the plan which I have pondered long:
Approve it now, or, if ye deem it wrong,
Show, after due debate, a wiser way,
Which I will strive to follow if I may.'

He ceased. A murmur of so loud acclaim
From lords and commons in glad answer came,
As when wild peacocks at the rain rejoice,
And hail the big cloud with their jubilant voice.
The general shout from all the people round
Shook the high palace with a storm of sound.
And when the crowd, assembled there, had learned
The will of him who right and gain discerned,
After a brief debate, with one accord,
They spake in answer to their sovereign lord:

'Rest, aged King, and let Prince Rama share
The toil too sore for thee, as Regent Heir:
Our own dear Prince so gallant and so strong,
All tongues will bless him as he rides along:
All hearts rejoice above his brow to see
The canopy that long has shaded thee.

Amid the noblest of the world not one
Can match the virtues of thy godlike son.
In him alone all peerless graces blend,
The fearless foeman and the faithful friend ;
Versed in the statutes, kind to all in need,
Quick to encourage every noble deed ;
True to his promise, resolute of soul,
Curbing each passion with a firm control ;
Kind to the Brahmans skilled in Scripture's page,
The friend of learning and the prop of age.
Matchless on earth with spear and sword and shield,
Lord of the arms which heavenly warriors wield ;
Thine order bids him tame some foeman's pride ;
He comes a victor, Lakshman at his side.
Then from his elephant, or car, he bends
To greet the townsmen as beloved friends :
Asks how each man and child and servant thrives,
How fare our young disciples, babes, and wives,
And like a loving father bids us tell
That Heaven accepts our rites, and all is well.
Long has each matron, long each tender maid,
At morn and eve for Rama's welfare prayed :

And Rama's glories every hour are sung
In town and village by the old and young.
Then grant the prayer, by us this day renewed,
And consecrate our Prince, Lord Rama, lotus-hued.'

MANTHARA'S GUILE.

"But this happiness was all destroyed by the intrigues of Dasaratha's second wife, who was jealous of Rama, and determined that her son Bharat should be the future king." MRS. SPEIR.

High on the palace roof Kaikeyi's maid,
The crook-back Manthara, the town surveyed.
She saw the water sprinkled o'er the street,
And flowery heaps and garlands fresh and sweet:
Saw pennons playing in the scented air,
And busy Brahmans bustling here and there.
From every corner, as around she gazed,
She heard a concert of glad music raised;
While every temple shone with purest white,
That the maid marvelled at the festive sight.

She turned to Rama's nurse, who standing by,
Gazed on the scene with rapture-rolling eye,
And cried 'I pray thee, aged matron, say,
Does Rama's mother scatter gifts to-day?
Have the Gods listened to Kausalya's vow,
And made the frugal Queen so lavish now?'

The white-robed nurse, with transport uncontrolled,
All the glad story to the damsel told:
'To-morrow's happy light will see,' she cried,
'Prince Rama Regent by his father's side.'

Down from the roof, high as Kailasa's[1] head,
In furious haste the crook-back maiden sped:
Planning accursed guile, her soul aflame,
Where Queen Kaikeyi lay asleep, she came.
'Up, Queen!' she cried, 'unclose thy heedless eyes;
Huge peril threatens thee, awake! arise!
Art thou still sleeping, still too blind to see
The load of misery that crushes thee?

[1] 'One of the loftiest peaks of the Himalayas.

Boast of thy husband's love, and find too late
His vaunted favour but disguises hate.
Ruin to thee and thine, thy lord has planned
To make Prince Rama Regent o'er the land.
In fear and grief and rage thy faithful slave
Has hither fled to warn thee and to save.
Are not my fortunes closely knit with thine?
Thy gain and peril, both, are also mine.
And thou, the scion of a princely race,
Shouldst know the frauds which royal hearts disgrace.
Poor Queen, he loves thee not: thy treacherous lord
Can smile upon thee while he bares the sword:
And thy sweet soul, pure from all thought of sin,
Sees not the cruel snares that hem thee in.
Kind flattering words he makes thine empty dower,
But Queen Kausalya has the wealth and power.
Far from thy side thine own dear son he sends
To live an exile with his mother's friends;
And, every rival thus removed from sight,
He gives to Rama all the royal might.
Alas! deluded lady, thou hast prest
A deadly serpent to thy foolish breast,

Lavishing love on him who works thee woe,
No loving husband but a mortal foe.
Come, rouse thee; mistress, while there yet is time;
Ensure thy safety and prevent the crime.
Up from thy careless ease! awake, and be
The saviour of thy son, thyself, and me.'

Up rose Kaikeyi radiant with delight,
Like the calm moon upon the autumn night,
And spoke these words in answer, as she gave,
For the glad news, a necklace to the slave:
'Take this, dear maiden, for thy pains, and say
How can my love thy welcome tale repay.
I joy that Rama shares his father's throne:
I love Kausalya's son e'en as I love mine own.'

The handmaid's soul with grief and fury burned;
She cried in anger, as the gift she spurned:
'What! on the sea of whelming ruin tost,
Canst thou rejoice when all but hope is lost?
Heart-sick I am, yet smile to see thy joy
When peril threatens and will soon destroy.

If thou wert wise thou scarce wouldst hail, I ween,
For king, the offspring of a rival queen.
Soon wilt thou stand in menial habit drest,
And move obedient to her high behest.
Yea, thou wilt serve with us who serve thee now,
And see thy child before his brother bow.
Then Rama's wife will triumph, queen of all,
And thy poor daughter be a helpless thrall.'

'The virtuous Rama,' thus the dame replied,
'From virtue's path will never turn aside.
Obedient, grateful, pure from stain, and true,
As eldest born he only gains his due.
His lords and brethren many a year will share,
Blest in his rule, his kind paternal care:
And when a hundred years have past away,
My son, dear Bharat, will enjoy the sway.
I love Prince Rama as mine own dear son;
I see no fault to stain him, no not one.
Gentle and lowly, good and kind is he,
Meek to his mother, meeker still to me,

What though he rule, there is no cause of fear,
To him his brethren as his soul are dear:
And though in name his father's place he fill,
Bharat will share the royal sceptre still.'

Kaikeyi ceased. The impatient maiden sighed,
And thus with tears of grief and spite replied:
'Ah Queen, what frenzy has assailed thy mind,
And made thee thus to instant danger blind?
Too blind to mark the seas of grief and woe
That o'er thy head with whelming fury flow.
For after Rama Rama's son will reign,
Nor hope of kingship for thy child remain.
One heir is monarch when a monarch dies,
Else wild confusion in the state would rise:
And be he good or bad, the power will fall
To him, the eldest born and lord of all.
Know, tender mother, that thy boy must flee,
A wretched outcast, from his home and thee.
For Rama's hand thy darling son will drive
An exile hence, if haply left alive.

Come, take the counsel that is wise and good,
And banish Rama to the distant wood.
Then we who serve thee well, a faithful train,
Will hail with joy Prince Bharat's happier reign.
How shall he, worthy of a nobler fate,
From birth the object of his brother's hate,
Poor and despised, his wealthy tyrant's scorn,
Obey the mandates of the elder born?
Arise, sweet Queen, to save thy child, arise!
Prostrate beneath his brother's feet he lies;
Like some young elephant, who, proud to lead
His trooping consorts through the woods to feed,
Meets with a hungry lion in the way,
And sinks in death, his ruthless victor's prey.'

Then flasht the fury from Kaikeyi's eyes,
As thus she spake with long and burning sighs:
'This day my son upon the throne shall see,
And Rama banisht to the wood shall flee.
But aid me, damsel, and some plan declare
To drive him hence and make my child the heir.'
'Hast thou forgotten?' thus the maid replied,

'Or dost thou love thy secret thoughts to hide?
Or dost thou wish, gay Queen, to hear me tell
An ancient story which thou knowest well?
Then I will speak: Lady, be thine to hear,
And mark my counsel with attentive ear.
In days of yore the Gods thy husband chose
To aid their arms against their demon foes.
Thou, of thy love, didst follow where he led,
And thou wast near him when he fought and bled.
Thy care preserved him, when in desperate strife
He sank exhausted, and restored his life.
Grateful for this, thy loving husband sware
To grant two boons, thy first and second prayer.
Then come, remind him of his ancient oath,
Recall the promised gifts and claim them both.
For thine own son, thy well-loved Bharat, claim
The right of heirship and the Regent's name,
And pray that Rama in the woods may roam
Twice seven long years an exile from his home.
Once more attend: the gloomy chamber[1] seek,

[1] Literally, *the chamber of wrath*, *a 'growlery,'* a small, dark, room, to which, it seems, the wives and ladies of the King used to betake themselves when offended.

Rage in thine eye and tears upon thy cheek;
With robes disordered and dishevelled hair
Fall on the cold ground and lie prostrate there.
When the King comes, still sad and speechless lie,
Give him no answer, lift not up thine eye.
Well do I know that thou hast ever been,
And more than ever art, his favourite queen.
For thy dear sake he'd dare, O well-loved dame,
To cast his body to the burning flame:
Such death were welcome, but he ne'er will brook
To anger thee or bear thine angry look.
Fain will he offer gems and pearls and gold:
Heed not his gifts: be silent, stern, and cold.
Then to his mind those promised boons recall,
And claim them boldly: he will grant thee all.
When he has raised his darling from the floor,
And sworn again to grant as first he swore,
Then for thy son demand the royal sway,
And drive Prince Rama to the woods away.
Hope, and be bold: the King is well inclined,
And this the hour to move his easy mind.'

Then Queen Kaikeyi, full of joy and pride,
Thus to her maid in gladsome tone replied:
'Good is the plan thy ready wits devise,
Sagest of damsels, true and deep and wise!
Without thy constant care, thy faithful aid,
Unknown to me the King his plot had laid.
The crook-back race are hideous to the sight,
Deformed, malicious, born for guile and spite:
Far other thou, with features formed to please,
A lovely lotus bending to the breeze.
Thy hump, dear damsel, too, becomes thee well,
For there the arts of noble warriors dwell;
And when Kausalya's son makes way for mine,
Around that hump a chain of gold shall shine.
Yes, I will deck thee on that happy day
When Rama banisht takes my fear away:
With finest gold these hands thy hump shall deck,
And fling rich pearls around thy graceful neck.
A precious frontlet, wrought with utmost care,
Bound on thy brow, shall make thy face more fair;
And thou shalt move along in bright attire,
Each woman's envy and each man's desire:

Fair as a lovely Goddess shalt thou be,
And challenge the sweet moon to rival thee.'

Her lady's praise with joy the damsel heard,
And thus again with wiles her spirit stirred,
As the Queen lay upon her sumptuous bed
Like sacred fire upon the altar fed :
'Mistress, arise, the glorious plot complete :
Let the King find thee in thy dark retreat.
No prudent builder will the bridge delay
Till the wild waters shall have rolled away.'
She ceased. The lady of the glorious eyes
Rose from her couch as Manthara bade her rise ;
And sought the mourner's cell, in beauty's pride
Sure of his love who gave and ne'er denied.
There on the ground, obedient to the girl,
She threw her necklace and each peerless pearl,
And all the lustre to her beauty lent
By sparkling chain and golden ornament.
Like a fair nymph upon the ground she fell ;
And 'Soon,' she cried, 'thy task will be to tell
That Bharat rules as heir in Rama's stead,
Or that the Monarch's darling queen is dead.'

DASARATHA'S OATH.

"Unfortunately Dasaratha had once given a promise to Bharat's mother that he would grant any two boons she pleased to ask. The promise had been made in years gone by, when he had been dangerously wounded in battle, and carefully attended by this wife, Kaikeyi; and amongst Hindus a promise was irrevocable, and therefore the wretched King felt compelled to yield, although the first boon required was to banish Rama for a period of fourteen years, and the second to declare Bharat the heir apparent." *Life in Ancient India.*

Slow and majestic, as the Lord of Night,[1]
When his full glory fears the Dragon's[2] might,
Glides through the calm fields of the autumn sky,
Where clouds with fleecy skirts are floating by,

[1] The moon, with the Hindus, is masculine.

[2] Rahu, the ascending node, is in mythology a demon with the tail of a dragon whose head was severed from his body by Vishnu, but being immortal the head and tail retained their separate existence, and being transferred to the stellar sphere became the authors of eclipses; the first especially by endeavouring to swallow the sun and moon.

So to Kaikeyi's palace, rich and vast,
King Dasaratha in his glory past.
There stalked flamingoes mixt with swans and cr[illegible]
And gorgeous peacocks spread their jewelled trains;
There screamed the parrot in his home of wire,
There breathed the music of the flute and lyre.
There many a damsel waited in the shade,
Here sat a dwarf, and there a crook-back maid
Lay in the shadow of the woven bower
Where glowed the Champac[1] and Asoca[2] flower.
There many a porch, above the waving wood,
On ivory columns wrought with silver, stood.
There trees that aye with fruit and blossom glowed
O'er limpid waters hung their tempting load.
Here seats of silver and of gold were placed,
Here cates and viands lured the dainty taste.
Not e'en the Gods who dwell at ease, I ween,
Could boast a brighter home than that fair queen.

[1] A tree that bears yellow flowers of delicious fragrance:
"The maid of India, blest again to hold
In her full lap the Champac's leaves of gold."—*Lalla Rookh.*

[2] The Jonesia Asoca one of the loveliest trees of India, and perhaps of the whole world.

With longing eyes the Monarch looked around,
But no Kaikeyi in her bower he found;
Yet 'twas the time at which the royal dame
Was ever there to greet him as he came.
Then, moved by love and vext with anxious thought,
News of his darling from her maids he sought.
'My lord,' a trembling damsel thus replied,
'The Queen in anger to the cell has hied.'
Then sick at heart, his senses all astray,
The Monarch hastened where the lady lay
Upon the cold bare ground, in mean attire,
While grief consumed her as a burning fire.
Prostrate and speechless, lovely and forlorn,
Like a sweet creeper by the roots uptorn,
Or a frail nymph of Heaven, or Goddess, hurled
From glorious Swarga[1] to this nether world.

As bends an elephant to heal the smart
Of his mate wounded by a venomed dart,
Soothes her with tender touch, and tries in vain
To check the flowing blood and stay her pain;

[1] Indra's Paradise.

So the sad husband tried each kind caress
To still the fury of the Queen's distress:
'I know not, darling,' thus he spake, with sighs,
To the fair lady of the lotus eyes,
'The sudden cause of all this wrath and woe,
Why thou art angry, why thine eyes o'erflow.
Who has offended thee, or dared to slight
My love, my lady, and my sole delight?
Tell me, my dearest, art thou faint or ill?
I have physicians of unrivalled skill,
One for each varied malady and pain:
Come, speak, Kaikeyi, and be well again.
Wouldst thou for foe or friend have dole or meed?
The guiltless punisht or the guilty freed?
The low exalted or the proud disgraced?
The poor made wealthy or the rich abased?
Tell but thy secret wish, dear love, I pray;
My lords and I thy slightest word obey.
By all the merit that my life has won
I swear, my darling; speak, and it is done.
The whole broad earth whereon the sunbeams shine,
And all her flocks and corn and gold are mine;

Choose what thou wilt: no bounds shall bar thy choice,
But let me hear again thine own dear voice,
And all thy grief and pain shall pass away
Like hoar frost shrinking from the God of Day.'

The Queen replied: 'No insult has distrest,
No fault of others has enraged my breast.
Come, with a mighty oath thine honour bind
To grant the boon for which my soul has pined.'
She ceased. The King, by his great love betrayed,
Leapt, like a roedeer, to the snare she laid.
With a fond smile beneath his darling's head
He placed his hand, and raised her up, and said:
'Hast thou not learnt, my foolish love, till now,
That on this earth there is none dear as thou
To me, save only Rama? By his life
I swear to grant thee what thou wilt, dear wife:
I swear by him most worthy long to live,
Blest with all blessings that the Gods can give,
My peerless boy, pride of mine aged eye,
Whom but one hour to see not, is to die.'

'Now hear,' she cried, 'ye thirty Gods and three,
Witness the oath that he has sworn to me!
Hear it, ye Sun and Moon; thou Ether, hear;
O Night and Day, O World and Space, give ear!
Listen thou Heaven above; attend O Earth,
With visitants of more than mortal birth!
Angel, and demon, and night-wandering shade,
And Household Deities, our present aid;
Each Power and high Intelligence, with all
That think and know, to hear his oath I call.
And now, I pray thee, O my lord and king,
A time long past to thy remembrance bring,
When Gods and demons met in furious fray,
And I preserved thee on that awful day.
Call to thy mind the guerdon promised then,
And grant my double prayer, O King of men.
If thou refuse to do as thou hast sworn,
Despised by thee I will not live till morn.
This solemn pomp in Rama's name begun—
Grace Bharat with it: consecrate my son;
And forth to Dandak's distant forest drive
Thy Rama, banisht for nine years and five.

There let him lead a hermit's life, and wear
The deerskin mantle and the matted hair.'

Like a poor doe who sees the tigress near,
Lost and amazed and stupified with fear,
He spoke no word, but sinking on the ground
Sighed like a serpent by the charmer bound.
At length, when slowly voice and sense returned,
He bent upon the Queen fierce eyes that burned
With flashes of intolerable ire,
Eager to scorch her with their furious fire:
'What wrong,' he cried, 'have I or Rama done,
Scourge of my house, thou fell and wicked one?
Hast thou the heart to ruin my sweet boy,
And him who loves thee as a son, destroy?
Ah! woe is me that e'er I made thee mine,
And brought thee home, the ruin of my line,
In name the daughter of a king, in truth
A deadly serpent with a venomed tooth.
Tell me, what fault can I pretend to find
In virtuous Rama, praised by all mankind?

How can I then my darling son forsake?
No, take my life, my royal honours take,
Be either queen from my embraces torn,
But not my Rama, not mine eldest born.
Gazing on him mine aged eyes are glad,
And when I see him not my soul is sad.
The world may live without the sun, the grain
Spring from the earth without the genial rain.
But I without my son should be no more:
Take Rama from me, and my life is o'er.
Banish the thought! thine impious plan forego;
How couldst thou scheme a plot so full of woe?
Canst thou no mercy find, no sorrow feel?
See, with thy feet upon my head, I kneel.
Thou dost not mean it: 'tis a cruel jest
To try the love that warms a father's breast.
Hast thou not oft, when in thy lap he smiled,
Sworn he was dear to thee as thine own child?
Has he not since, to youth and manhood grown,
Most sonlike love and sweet obedience shown?
Never from man or woman have I heard
Against my Rama one accusing word.

His gentle manners, ever soft and kind,
All hearts to him in firm affection bind.
Truthful and just, that noble prince of men
Is loved and honoured by each citizen.
A docilė pupil, prompt to succour woe,
Feared by the foeman for his matchless bow,
Faithful and pious, reverent, sincere,
Holy and wise, to all most justly dear:
Canst thou for him thy wicked plot devise,
Good as the Gods and as the sages wise?
No angry word, no harsh reproof e'er slips
From the fair portal of his gentle lips.
And at thy bidding how can I consent
To curse him with the doom of banishment?
O wife, have mercy! hear my bitter cry,
A poor old weeping man whose death is nigh.
This sea-girt land has treasures rich and rare:
Take all, Kaikeyi, but my Rama spare.
Once more, O Queen, my suppliant hands entreat;
Once more my lips are on thy lovely feet.
O save my Rama, save my dearest child,
Nor let me die a wretch dishonoured and defiled.'

No thrill of pity through her bosom ran,
As thus again the cruel Queen began :
'If thou hast promised and art now forsworn,
How wilt thou keep thine ancient name from scorn ?
When gathered kings thy truth and honour praise,
How wilt thou bear thine abject eyes to raise
And answer thus: 'Ah ! Kings, ye little know ;
My queen to whose fond care my life I owe,
Saved by whose sweet love I am living now—
To her I promised and I broke my vow.'
Then will they scorn the king once counted just,
And tread his vaunted honour in the dust.
His flesh and blood the truthful Saivya[1] gave,
And fed the hawk, a suppliant dove to save :
True to his word Alarka gave his eyes,
And gained rich guerdon in the blissful skies.
The furious sea himself his promise keeps,
And ne'er beyond his stated limit sweeps.[2]

[1] A just and truthful king, who being unwilling to deprive a hawk of his prey or to betray the dove to which he had promised protection, gave his own flesh to the hawk who would accept nothing else instead. The story is told in the *Mahabharata*, in different ways, of more than one king.

[2] "What more changeful than the Sea ?
But over his great tides
Fidelity presides."—WORDSWORTH.

Remember all I did for thy dear sake,
And tremble now thy promised word to break.
Thou hopest Rama to the throne to raise,
And with Kausalya live voluptuous days.
But be it truth or falsehood, right or wrong,
I claim thy promise unredeemed so long.
Make Rama Regent, and before thine eyes
This day Kaikeyi drinks the bowl, and dies.
Far better die, than live one day, to see
Obsequious subjects, with no glance on me,
Before my rival Rama's mother stand,
And hail her Lady with the suppliant hand.
Now by my son and by myself I swear,
No tears shall soften me, no gift or prayer;
This, only this shall now my soul content:
I claim thine oath and Rama's banishment.'

THE STEP-MOTHER.

The night "long and dreary as a hundred years" which the unhappy King has spent in lamentation and entreaties to the inexorable Kaikeyi is past, and the morning appointed for the consecration of Rama is come. Rama having been summoned enters the chamber where the King and Kaikeyi are.

Weighed down by woe, with wild despairing mien,
There sate the Monarch with the cruel Queen.
Then Rama bowed, his royal sire to greet,
And did obeisance at Kaikeyi's feet.
The King with downcast eyes still brimming o'er
Just murmured, Rama! and could say no more.
Then sudden fear made even Rama shake,
As though his heedless foot had toucht a snake.
How could he look upon that awful change,
And bear, unmoved, a sight so sad and strange!

A mighty monarch but an hour ago,
Now a poor mourner, weak and wan with woe:
Weeping and groaning, mad with wildering thought,
Like the deep wave-crowned sea to frenzy wrought:
Like the bright Sun-God labouring in eclipse,
Or like a holy sage whose heedless lips
Have spoken falsely. Rama's tender breast
Knew for awhile the moon-drawn sea's unrest;
And pierced with sorrow for his father's sake,
To Queen Kaikeyi, reverent, he spake:

'Tell me my fault, or plead for me and win
His pardon, angered by my careless sin.
Why is my father, whom I ever find
Most full of love, so silent and unkind?
To what sharp anguish or what care a prey
Weeps he and sighs and turns his face away?
Say, has some grievous woe, some deadly ill
Stricken his sons, or consorts dearer still?
Better to die than grieve a loving sire:
Death has no terror like a father's ire.

Surely the source to which he owes his birth
Must to a son be as a God on earth.
Then speak, O lady, speak, that I may know
What sudden grief has changed my father so.'

Thus Rama questioned; and the greedy dame
Gave her bold answer, lost to ruth and shame:
'No fault of thine thy father's soul offends;
No deadly stroke upon his house descends.
One wish he fosters, to his heart most dear;
And he would tell thee, but he shrinks in fear.
Thou art so fondly loved, no voice has he
To utter aught but pleasant words to thee.
Then hear his wish, and as a duteous son
Look that thy father's will be quickly done.
He, though a king, with most unkingly mind
Like a mean caitiff of the lowest kind,
Would stint the honour and the boon deny
He sware to grant me in the days gone by.
Faith, holy faith, whence all our duties spring,
Should ne'er be slighted by our lord the King.

Not e'en in anger, not for thy dear sake,
May he his oath and plighted promise break.
He will not say what promised boon I seek;
Before thy face he will not, dare not, speak.
Do thou but swear his promise shall not fall
Lost to the ground, and I will tell thee all.'

She ceased. Then Rama, with a troubled breast,
These words in answer to the Queen addrest:
'Thou needst not utter words like these to me:
To do his will my highest joy must be.
To feed the flames my body I will throw;
Drink deadly poison, if his will be so;
Plunge in the tide if he would have it done,
My sire, my master, and my king in one.
Then speak, O lady; with no doubting heart
The secret longing of my sire impart.
I swear obedience: let my word suffice,
For 'tis not Rama's wont to promise twice.'

Then spoke Kaikeyi to the noble youth,
Undaunted champion of the rights of truth:

'When the Gods, aided by thy father's might,
Waged with the fiends, of yore, their furious fight,
Wounded by many a dart the Monarch fell,
And I preserved the life I loved so well.
Restored by me to health and strength, he sware
To grant two boons, the guerdon of my care;
And these, at length, I crave this day may be
The throne for Bharat and the woods for thee.
Now if his honour in thine eyes be dear,
Keep his fair fame from stain of falsehood clear.
Go to the distant wilderness, and wear
The hermit's mantle and the matted hair.
Nine years and five in the wild forest stay,
That Bharat may be lord, ordained to-day;
And then this land, rich in each precious thing,
Steed, car, and elephant, shall hail him King.
Moved with great pity for thy mournful case
Thy father cannot look upon thy face.
Come, noble Prince, his darling honour save,
And, firm in faith, observe the oath he gave.'

The hero answered, tranquil and sedate,

That cruel speech, fell as the doom of Fate:
'Fear not, O lady, but thy wish obtain:
My father's faith shall ne'er be pledged in vain.
With hermit's mantle and with matted hair
Forth to the woods, an exile, will I fare.
One thing alone, O Queen, I fain would learn,
Why is my lord the King to-day so stern?
Why is he now so silent and so cold,
Without one smile to greet me, as of old?
My greatest joy is ever to fulfil
My king, my master, and my father's will;
One only care torments my anxious breast,
Why his own lips have not his will exprest;
Why could he not himself to me make known
His choice of Bharat for the royal throne.
To Bharat's hand I gladly would resign
My bride, my life, my gold, and all that's mine.
Unaskt, most freely would I give him all:
How much more gladly at my father's call!
How much more gladly when the gift may free
His fame from blemish and give joy to thee!
Let swiftest heralds, ordered by the King,

Home from thy brother's house thy Bharat bring.
To judge my father's words I will not stay,
But seek the forest ere the close of day;
There live, a banisht man, four years and ten,
Keeping the promise of the King of men.'

''Tis well,' she answered. 'Let the herald speed,
Carried by coursers of the fleetest breed,
And bring my Bharat home. Methinks that thou
Wilt brook no tarrying nor linger now.
And if the King, o'erwhelmed with shame, could find
No tongue to tell thee, bear not this in mind.
But, best of youths, until thou hence art fled,
Thy sire will neither bathe nor call for bread.'

'Woe! woe!' the Monarch murmured, with a groan,
Deep 'neath the waves of whelming anguish thrown;
Then in exceeding grief he swooned away,
And on the gold-wrought couch all senseless lay.
Then Rama raised him, while Kaikeyi's tongue
Still urged him, like a horse by lashes stung.

Unmoved he answered: 'Queen, I strive to do
My duty only, like the sages true;
Nor would I, with a soul athirst for gain,
False to my promise, in the world remain.
All I can do to please my father, think
Already done: from death I would not shrink:
One duty, paramount of duties still,
Is that a son should do his father's will.
By him unbidden, if the word thou give,
Will I an exile in the forest live.
Couldst thou no virtue in my nature see
That thou must crave of him, not ask of me?
This day I go in Dandak's wilds to dwell:
First to my mother I must bid farewell,
And comfort Sita. Thine the charge must rest
That Bharat listen to his sire's behest,
And keep the kingdom happy and secure:
This is the law that ever shall endure.'

In speechless woe the hapless father heard,
And wept with bitter cry, but spoke no word.

Then bowing at the senseless Monarch's feet,
And stern Kaikeyi's, for such love unmeet,
Once round the pair his circling steps he bent,
Then from the bower the glorious exile went.
Him followed Lakshman, sweet Sumitra's child,
With angry weeping eyes so sad and wild.
And Rama saw, nor turned his eyes away,
The sacred vessels ranged for that great day ;
And golden chalices, whose waters shed
O'er his young brows had sanctified his head.
He saw, and round them in due honour paced,
His eye no anguish showed, his foot no haste.
Still on his brow, with lofty hope o'erthrown,
Shone the great glory which was all his own:
So will the moon, through the world's love, retain
Delicious splendour in the days of wane.

MOTHER AND SON.

Rama goes from the presence of his afflicted father and exulting stepmother to pay a farewell visit to Kausalya, who is full of joyful anticipations on her son's account.

On to his mother's splendid bower he went,
And found the Queen on holy rites intent.
There oil, and rice, and brimming vases stood,
With wreaths of flowers, and curds, and cates, and wood.
She with her thin cheek pale with many a fast,
And many a night in painful vigil past,
In linen robes of purest white arrayed,
To Lakshmi Queen of Heaven her offerings made.
Soon as she saw the darling of her soul,
As a fond mare who springs to meet her foal,

To greet her son, unseen so long, she flew,
And round his neck her tender arms she threw :
'May all the glories of thy royal line,'
She cried, with kisses on his brow, 'be thine.
Be wise and mighty like thy sires of old,
Be good and noble, pious, lofty-souled.
This day thy father's faithful love is shown :
This day he sets thee on his ancient throne.'

Then answered Rama, 'Dearest lady, know
That danger threatens, fraught with mighty woe.
My father's choice this day makes Bharat heir ;
And I must hence to Dandak's wood, and there
Living on fruit and honey, hermit's food,
Pass twice seven dreary years in solitude.'

Swift as a Sal branch, by the woodman lopt
In some primeval grove, the lady dropt
And lay upon the ground. So falls a mare
Beneath the load she strives in vain to bear.
And Rama raised her up, and brusht away
The dust that on her arm and shoulder lay.

'A grief more sore,' she cried, 'I ne'er could mourn
If thou hadst never, O my son, been born;
Yet, well I know, their childless fate, to those
Who pine for offspring, is the crown of woes.
I, eldest queen, to those I scorn, must bend,
And let my rival's taunt my bosom rend.
What woman's lot can be so hard as mine,
In endless woe and mourning doomed to pine?
Have they not scorned me when my son was near?
And death will follow when thou art not here.
'Twas ne'er my lot my husband's love to gain,
And now I'm mockt by proud Kaikeyi's train;
And those who served me once, a faithless band,
Now far aloof in gloomy silence stand.
How shall I brook her scolding tongue to hear,
And, better far than she, her anger fear?
Since thou wast born ('tis seventeen years ago)
I still have lookt to thee to end my woe.
Now what remains but shame and grief, a share
Of trouble heavier than my soul can bear!
How will my gloomy days go darkly by
Without thy moon-bright face to cheer mine eye?

Alas! my cares thy tender years to train,
And all my vows and fasts and prayers were vain.
Hard is my heart, or surely it had burst
When the wild rush of sorrow reacht it first;
As in the Rains no river bank can hold
The headlong torrent from the mountains rolled.
Ah no! my death is not allowed by Fate,
Nor opes for me the Gloomy King his gate:
He will not take me to his home away,
A lion pitying his weeping prey.
Death will not listen to a wretch's cry,
Nor take his soul ere fate would have him die,
Or I, bereaved of my son, had fled
To Yama's[1] home, and been among the dead.
Why should I live without thee? I will go
After thee, Rama, though my steps be slow,
As a poor cow, in her great love, will run
Watching the wanderings of her little one.'

While sad Kausalya wept and groaned and sighed,
Thus, moved with righteous anger, Lakshman cried:

[1] The Indian Pluto.

'O venerable Queen, I like it not
That Rama, victim of a woman's plot,
Should fly an exile to the woods, and leave
The land to languish and his friends to grieve.
The King, luxurious, doting, old, and weak,
Will hear her voice and, as she orders, speak.
But why should Rama, pure of sin and stain,
Flee from his kingdom to a life of pain?
What man could ever, deaf to duty's call,
Forsake his godlike son beloved of all?
What son that father's senseless will obey,
In second childhood 'neath a woman's sway?
Come, Rama, come, and ere this plot be known
Accept my succour and secure the throne.
Before thy face what foe will dare to stand
When thou art guarded by my good right hand?
Nay, like the grisly Monarch of the Dead,
Thine eye alone will strike the bold with dread.
Or, if thou wilt, mine arrows and my bow
Shall lay all dwellers in Ayodhya low:
So shall the foemen find mine arm is strong;
The patient ever are the prey of wrong.

Nay, were it not that Queen Kaikeyi's art
Has swayed our father and destroyed his heart,
My voice should now his ruthless hate arraign,
And cry, The Monarch shall be slain, be slain.
Queen, by this bow and by my faith I swear,
To thy dear Rama such the love I bear,
Come life come death, our path shall be the same
To the wild forest or the deadly flame.
Come, try my love, and let me prove my might
Before thy presence and in Rama's sight:
Before my power thy woe shall flee away
As the night flees before the morning ray.'

'O Rama, hear him,' thus, with streaming eyes,
Cried sad Kausalya, 'for his words are wise.
Wilt thou, obedient to my rival's will,
Please her who hates thee, and thy mother kill?
If love and honour to thy sire be due,
Hast thou no honour for thy mother too?
My life were woe without thee, but how sweet,
With thee, dear son, though grass were all my meat!

But if no prayers thy firm resolve can bend,
I fly to death, my hopeless woe to end;
And thou, thy mother's murderer, wilt bear
The punishment of Hell and torment there.'

'Forgive me, mother,' thus the hero spake,
'I have no power my sire's command to break.
See, at thine honoured feet I bend me low:
Once more forgive me, for I needs must go.
Not I the first this path of duty tread:
Of yore 'twas trodden by the mighty dead.
Now let me hear, dear Queen, thy kind farewell;
But if I go in distant wilds to dwell,
'Tis not for ever, mother, that I leave
My home and thee. Again thou shalt receive
Thy son with rapture, all his exile o'er;
Then be thou comforted and grieve no more.'
'If thou wilt listen to no prayers of mine,
Go forth,' she cried, 'thou best of Raghu's line!
Go forth, my darling, and return with speed,
And tread the path where noble spirits lead.

May Virtue ever on thy steps attend,
And thee, her lover, from all woe defend.
May all the Gods to whom thy vows are paid,
And all the mighty saints afford their aid.
The heavenly arms, that Viswamitra[1] gave,
Thy precious life in hours of danger save!
Thy filial love and meek obedience arm
Thy soul, my Rama, like a mystic charm!
May every shrine where sacred grass is spread,
And every altar where the flame is fed,
Lake and wild mountain, bush and towering tree,
Give ready succour, O my son, to thee.
May Vishnu, Brahma, and the Sun befriend,
And all the Powers their high protection lend.
The years, the seasons, months, and nights and days,
And hours, watch over thee in all thy ways!
Eternal Scripture and the Law revealed
To ancient sages be thy trusty shield!
The War-God aid thee, and the Moon on high,
And wise Brihaspati be ever nigh.

[1] A saint, the friend and preceptor of Rama.

Thy help be Narad[1] and the sainted Seven,
And the great limitary Lords of Heaven![2]
Yea, these shall guard thee, when their praise I sing,
The hills, the waters, and the waters' King.
The sky and ether, earth and wandering air,
Protect thee ever with their fostering care!
Each lunar mansion be for thee benign:
With happier light for thee the planets shine!
Thou shalt not fear, by guardian angels screened,
The savage giant or night-roving fiend.
Before thy steps let cruel tigers flee,
Let bears and lions never injure thee,
And mighty elephants that wander wild
Forbear to touch thy life, my noble child.
May all thy ways be happy! may success
With golden fruit thy hope and labour bless!
Loved by all Gods around, above, below,
Go forth, my son, my pride and glory, go!'

[1] A son of Brahma.

[2] Eight Gods, Regents of the four quarters and intermediate points of the compass.

Then on his knees before her Rama fell,
Prest her dear feet and said his last farewell;
And, radiant with the light her blessings lent,
To Sita's home his anxious steps he bent.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

But Rama's hardest trial yet remains, the parting from Sita his lovely and beloved wife. He briefly tells her of his altered lot, and bids her in his absence carefully discharge her duties to the Gods, his father, the three queens, the new King Bharat and his brothers. She tells him that man and wife are not thus to be parted, and declares that whithersoever he goes she will go also. In vain he sets before her the dangers and miseries that wait on banishment. Truth smiles at fear; and Love sees a Paradise in the wild with him. Rama yields to the passionate prayers of his devoted wife, and allows her to accompany him to the forest.[1]

As through his stately halls the hero past,
His eye was drooping and his brow o'ercast.
And Sita rose and trembled, quick to trace
The thought and sorrow on his darkened face;

[1] A version of part of this scene, from Gorresio's edition of the Bengal recension of the Ramayana, has appeared, under the title of "Sita," in *Idylls from the Sanskrit.* The main features are the same in both, but the details slightly differ.

For his strong bosom could no longer bear
The load of anguish that was heavy there.
Soon as she markt the clammy drops that hung
On his pale cheek, she cried with faltering tongue:
'What ails thee, O my lord? This happy day
Should see thee joyful: all but thou are gay.
Why does no royal canopy, like foam
For its white beauty, shade thee to thy home?
Where are the tuneful bards, thy deeds to sing?
Where are the fans that wave before the King?
Why doth the city send no merry throng
To bring thee home with melody and song?
Why doth no gilded car thy triumph lead
With four brave horses of the swiftest breed?
No favoured elephant precede the crowd,
Like a black mountain or a thunder-cloud?
No herald march in front of thee to hold
The precious burthen of thy throne of gold?
If thou be King, ordained this day, then why
This sorry plight, pale cheek and gloomy eye?'

Thus Sita questioned in her wild suspense.

And Rama said: 'My father sends me hence
An exile to the forest: hear me tell
The story, Sita, as it all befell.
Of old, to Queen Kaikeyi, bound by oath,
Two boons he granted: now she claims them both.
All was prepared for me: my father now
Is forced by Duty's mightier law to bow;
So Bharat sits upon the throne, and I
For twice seven years to distant forests fly.
Only to see thee ere we part, I came.
And now, dear Sita, never praise my name
In Bharat's presence: others' praise to hear
Is never welcome to a monarch's ear.
To him my father gives divided sway:
Do thou with willing love his rule obey.
With tender care the King's desire prevent;
Be ever gentle, humble, and content.
I go: be firm and strong, my noble spouse,
Keep well thy fasts and guard thy holy vows.
Rise from thy bed when day begins to break,
And to the Gods thy constant offerings make.
Then let the King thy duteous thoughts engage,

And cheer Kausalya worn with woe and age.
Then to the consort-queens thy love be shown :
They are my mothers even as mine own.
And O, forget not, Rama's brothers claim,
Loved like his life, the love of Rama's dame.
And never vex King Bharat's soul, for he
Is lord of all the land, our house, and thee.
Then here, obedient to his will, remain :
Honour thy King and all thy vows maintain.'

'Beseems,' she cried, 'this speech thy royal race,
To thee a blot, to me a foul disgrace ?
Master of weapons, lord of deadly strife,
Hear thou the duty of a warrior's wife.
Know that the father, mother, brother, son,
Obtain the lot their former deeds have won.
The wife alone her husband's fate must share,
And in thy trouble I my part will bear.
For not on father, mother, son, or friend,
But on her husband, must the wife depend.
And, if thou seek the wood, thy wife has sworn
To smooth thy path, nor let thy feet be torn.

No guile is in me: from thy bosom throw
The dregs of doubt, and give me leave to go.
I spurn the terrace and the pleasant seat:
Mine be the joy to guard thy cherisht feet.
Obedient ever to my parents' sway,
I will not hearken if they bid me stay.
I will go forth, the lonely wood to roam,
The lion's dwelling and the tiger's home,
Happy and heedless, from all terror free,
Careless of empire, caring but for thee.
With thee, delighted, will I wander where
Blooms, dropping honey, scent the woodland air.
Obeying thee and keeping still my vow
I will not tremble by thy side, for thou
Wouldst keep a stranger safe, and, sure, thine arm
Will guard thy Sita from all fear of harm.
I will not be a charge to thee: sweet fruits
The trees will yield me, and the earth her roots.
I will go first and, treading down the grass,
Make the way pleasant for my love to pass;
On the soft turf disclose my gathered store,
And sit and banquet when thy meal is o'er.

O, how I long, dear lord, to gaze my fill,
Guarded by thee, on lake, and wood, and hill;
See the red lilies in their native springs,
And gay flamingoes with their rosy wings!
And o'er my limbs those pleasant waters poured
Shall banish languor, O my large-eyed lord.
A thousand years would seem a single day
If spent with thee, but, were my love away,
Heaven would not charm me: O, be sure of this,
Without my love there is no Heaven, no bliss.'

Lost in deep thought awhile the hero stood,
And feared to lead her to the lonely wood.
With soothing words he strove her tears to dry,
And gently answered with a moistened eye:
'O virtuous daughter of a noble line,
To hear my words thy tender heart incline:
Here, duteous ever, still in peace remain:
Life in the woods is naught but grief and pain.
There roars the lion in his rocky cave
Loud as the torrents down the hill that rave.

There savage beasts in horrid ambush lie
And rend the heedless wretch who passes by.
Floods where the crocodile delights to play,
And furious elephants the eye dismay.
Then on the gale the wolf's long howl is borne
Through a wide wilderness of sand and thorn.
On the cold ground or on a scanty heap
Of gathered leaves the homeless wretch must sleep,
And stay his hunger with what fruit the blast
Hurls from the branches for his sad repast.
A coat of bark or skin his only wear,
Rough and untrimmed must be his matted hair.
Now on a snake the heedless foot will fall,
Now in thy path a deadly scorpion crawl,
And slimy reptiles creeping from the lake,
And clouds of gnats, thy troubled slumber break.
Enough, dear love; the wood is full of fear:
Remain, my Sita, and be happy here.'

Then Sita spoke once more with weeping eyes,
Her voice half mastered by her sobs and sighs:

'The woe, the terror, all the toil and pain,
Joined with thy love, to me are joy and gain.
Lion and tiger, elephant and boar,
And all the monsters thou hast counted o'er,
Soon as my Rama's glorious form they see,
In trembling fear will turn away and flee.
Not Indra's self, the ruler of the sky,
Would dare to harm me when my lord is nigh.
Long years ago I heard a sage foretell
That in the woods should be my fate to dwell:
The time is come: now make that promise true,
And when thou goest take thy Sita too.
O, let me go; whate'er I may endure,
Following thee, will make my soul more pure;
So joy shall crown me in the after life,
For thou art God unto thy loving wife.
Hear the high truth which saintly priests declare:
The after life rejoins the wedded pair.
But if thou wilt to no entreaties bend,
Poison or flood or flame my life shall end.
Fear not for me: when by thy side I go
My happy feet will never weary grow.

Though wild and rough the thorny ways I tread,
They shall feel softer than a silken bed.
When the wild wind with dust my raiment dims,
I'll call it perfume to refresh my limbs.
And when with thee in grassy glades I lie,
Watching the landscape with delighted eye,
Till, by thy side, I gently sink to rest,
What thing on earth shall be so richly blest?
The fruit thy dear hand gives me there to eat,
Little or much, shall be like amrit sweet.
Ne'er will I murmur at my lot, or grieve
For mother, father, or the home I leave.
My food shall be wild fruit, the flower, the weed:
I will not vex thee by a word or deed.
With thee is Heaven, where'er thou art not, Hell:
O, lead me hence that I in heaven may dwell.'
Then with a bitter cry her arms she flung
Round Rama's neck, and there in anguish clung:
While from her eyes pure floods, as from a pair
Of lotuses, poured down at every prayer.

He gently held her, raised her drooping head,

And staid the sweet soul that had wellnigh fled :
'Not Heaven shall bribe me from my wife to part.
I knew not, love, the strength of thy fond heart,
And hence in doubt thy prayer I first denied,
Though naught can harm thee by thy Rama's side.
Yea, thou wast formed by Heaven to share my fate,
To soothe my sorrows and divide their weight.
As powerless I to leave my love behind,
As a high saint his pity for mankind.
And now my duty leads me far away :
My sire commands it and I must obey.
Whate'er the order that my parents give,
I yield obedience, or must cease to live.
No, Sita, not the sacrificial blaze,
True heart, or liberal hand, or lip of praise,
Will with such lasting joy the spirit fill
As glad obedience to a father's will.
Come to the wood and aid my duties there,
But first at home thy helping hand prepare.
Arise, dear wife, nor let thy steps be slow,
Scatter our treasures quickly ere we go.
Bring forth thy corn and oil the poor to feast,

Give gold and jewels to each white-robed priest;
Gems and rich raiment, all thou hast beside,
Among thy maidens and the men divide.'

Then Lakshman's eyes with generous tears o'erflowed,
As his breast laboured with its grievous load.
He with fond touch his brother's feet carest,
And thus the hero and his wife addrest:
'Is such the purpose of thy changeless mind?
I with my trusty bow will walk behind.
Thy distant way through forest wilds will lead,
Where many a bird and gallant stag may bleed.
I would not leave thee to arise a God,
Though heaven and earth and hell obeyed my nod.'

'Dear as my life, my good and faithful friend,
Mine own dear brother,' Rama cried, 'attend.
Then were Sumitra of her hope bereft,
And sad Kausalya with no guardian left.
He who rains gifts, as Indra rains above,
Lies a poor captive in the snares of love;

And she, proud captor, now a queen indeed,
Will reck but little of her rivals' need.
Thine be the sacred duty to protect
Our honoured mothers from the Queen's neglect.'

'O Rama, fear not :' Lakshman thus replied ;
'In Bharat's love and Bharat's care confide.
If through his crime the kingdom suffer ill,
My vengeful hand the traitor's blood shall spill.
Yea, though auxiliar worlds were ranged in aid,
They should not save him : be not thou afraid.
And Queen Kausalya, from her ample stores,
Can raise a host like me to guard her doors :
Her thousand hamlets, rich with golden grain,
Will keep her nobly and a regal train.
Turn me not back : allow the earnest claim
Which all will own and hardly thou canst blame.
I shall rejoice, and thou wilt fain confess
Thy brother's presence makes thy labour less.
For in my hand I'll bear my shafts and bow,
A spade and basket o'er my shoulder throw.

I'll go before thee, and with watchful care
The way for Sita and for thee prepare.
I'll fetch thee roots and berries, ripe and sweet,
And the best fruits that gentle hermits eat.
Thou shalt with Sita on the slopes recline,
And all the labour shall be only mine.'

And Rama answered, joying at his speech :
'Then seek thy friends and bid farewell to each ;
And those two bows of heavenly fabric bring
Which Ocean's Lord erst gave Videha's King ;[1]
Those death-fraught quivers, coats of steel-proof mail,
And swords whose flashes make the sunbeams pale.'

[1] Janaka, father of Sita.

FAREWELL!

Rama, his wife, and brother walk through the streets crowded with mourning citizens to the palace of Dasaratha. They bid the King farewell and then leave Ayodhya amid the tears and lamentations of the people.

Their gold and gems among the Brahmans shared,
The bows were brought, the swords and mail prepared,
On which fair Sita with her faultless hand
Set here a flower, there tied a silken band.
Then to the palace walked the royal three
For the last time the aged King to see,
Through crowds that filled, as for a festive show,
Street, balcony, and roof, and portico.

'Ah! look, our hero, ever wont to ride,
Leading an army in its pomp and pride,—

Now only Lakshman, faithful to the end,
And his true wife, his weary steps attend.
Though his bright soul has known the sweets of power,
Though his free hand poured gifts in endless shower,
Yet firm in duty, resolute and brave,
He keeps the promise that his father gave.
And she, whose sweet face, delicately fair,
Not e'en the wandering spirits of the air
Might look upon, unveiling to the day
Walks, seen of all, along the open way.
Alas, her beauty ! Ah, that tender form !
How will it change beneath the sun and storm !
How will the piercing cold, the rain, the heat,
Pale her dear lips and stain her perfect feet !
Come, all ye mourners, share his weal and woe,
And follow Rama wheresoe'er he go.
Let us arise, our wives and children call,
And leave our fields and gardens, homes and all.
Our houses, empty of their store of grain,
With grass-grown courtyard and deserted lane :
Our ruined chambers, where the voice is still
Of women singing as they turn the mill :

Groves, where no children sport in thoughtless glee,
Nor elders sit beneath the mango-tree:
The falling shop, with none to buy or sell,
The pond choked up with weeds, the broken well:
Neglected temples, whence the Gods have fled,
O'errun with rats, with dust and dirt o'erspread;
Where floats no incense ou the evening air,
No hum of worship, and no Brahman's prayer:
Where broken vessels strew the unswept floor,
And the chain rusts upon the mouldering door—
These let the greedy Queen Kaikeyi gain,
And triumph in her melancholy reign.
Our town shall be a wilderness: where he,
Our Rama, lives, the wood our town shall be.
The snake shall leave his hole, the bear his den,
And settle in the empty homes of men.'
Such were the words of sorrow that the throng
Spoke loudly out as Rama past along,
And his hard fate in faithful love bewailed;
Yet not for this his lofty spirit failed.

On to the palace of the King he prest,

And thus Sumantra at the gate addrest:
'I pray thee, haste and let my father know
That Rama craves a blessing ere he go.'
He lingered not, but hastened where the King,
Lord of the world, lay sadly sorrowing;
Changed, like the sun behind a misty cloud;
Like the quencht flame which dust and ashes shroud;
Like a broad lake with its sweet waters dried.
With a slow faltering voice Sumantra cried:
'Long be thy days, O King! Thy Rama waits,
Thy lion-lord of men, before the gates.
His weeping friends his last farewell have heard,
Graced with a precious gift and pleasant word;
And now he longs his father's face to see,
And take a blessing, ere he go, of thee.'

'Haste,' cried the King, 'my queens and ladies call,
And bid my servants throng into the hall.'
Quick at the Monarch's word he called each dame,
And half seven hundred at the summons came.
When all were present, at the King's behest,
Rama and Lakshman in their armour drest,

Came toward the hall, with anxious ladies lined,
And gentle Sita meekly came behind.
But the old King, ere Rama yet was nigh,
Sprang from his throne, and with a bitter cry
Ran forth to meet him : but his limbs gave way,
And falling prostrate on the ground he lay.
And Rama threw him by his father's side,
And gently called him, but no voice replied.
Then with a mighty wail the hall was rent :
A thousand women, in one wild lament,
Cried, Rama, Rama ! 'mid the silver sound
Of tinkling ornaments their wrists that bound.
The King, unconscious, on a couch was laid,
And weeping Sita lent her tender aid,
And with her healing care restored him : then
Rama spoke, reverent, to the King of men :

'O father, thou both sire and sovereign art :
Bless me, I pray thee, for to-day we part.
Lakshman and Sita will not here remain :
Counsel is useless and entreaty vain.

Refuse them not, but grant thy kind consent
That they may follow as their heart is bent.
And now as kings dismiss their people, so
Grieve not, O lord, but bless and let us go.'
He stood expecting when the King should speak ;
Who answered : 'Rama, I am old and weak,
By Queen Kaikeyi's cruel guile misled :
Rule thou Ayodhya in thy father's stead.'
And Rama cried : 'A thousand years retain
Thy sceptre, King : I have no wish to reign.
I in the wild my destined years will spend,
And clasp thy feet returning when they end.
This populous land, which I this day resign,
Let Bharat rule, with all its corn and kine.
And from Kaikeyi do not thou withhold
Aught thy tongue promised in the days of old.
By thy good deeds and by thy truth I swear,
I crave not Heaven or all the glories there :
Wealth, lordship, life are worthless in mine eyes ;
One thing alone above the rest I prize,
That thou, my King and sire, shouldst still remain
Untoucht in honour, without spot or stain.

Weep not for me: thy troubled bosom still,
Nor hope with tears to change my changeless will.
My word is pledged as well as thine, for know
Kaikeyi prayed me, and I sware to go.
Grieve not: the forest will have charms for me,
Where sweet birds sing and wild deer wander free.
Swift will the years of easy exile run,
And thou once more shalt see restored thy son.'

'Make ready,' cried the King, 'a mighty force,
With cars and elephants and foot and horse:
Equip them nobly with the utmost care;
Silver and gold and priceless gems prepare.
Let various traders with the wealth they sell
Come from the city and the concourse swell;
And singing-women fair of form and face
The royal progress of Prince Rama grace.
Let every noble whom he counts his friend,
Enricht with precious gifts, his lord attend.
Let the best arms in many a ponderous wain,
And skilful huntsmen follow in his train.

It may be that the banisht Prince may blunt
Each sting of memory in the eager hunt.
And, as he sucks the wild-bee's balmy spoil,
Forget his kingdom and enjoy the toil.
Let all my gold, and boundless wealth of corn,
To the wild forest, where he goes, be borne.
For it will sweeten the poor exile's lot
To sacrifice in every holy spot:
To give rich offerings as he roams, and meet
Each saintly hermit in his lone retreat.'

And Rama answered: 'Useless, Sire, to me
The host, the riches, and the pomp would be:
For I, the world and all its lusts resigned,
Have left its pride and joys and cares behind.
My home is now the wilderness, and there
The hermit's life awaits, the hermit's fare.
Give me no banners o'er my head to float,
All I now covet is the hermit's coat.'

And Queen Kaikeyi, with unblushing brow,
Cried, 'See, 'tis ready: take and wear it now.'

The hero took it from her hand, and threw
His own fine robe upon the ground, and drew
The rough bark mantle on. So Lakshman braced,
His dress removed, the bark around his waist.
But modest Sita, in her silks arrayed,
Eyed the strange mantle trembling and afraid:
As from Kaikeyi's hand the coat she took,
She viewed it with a startled wondering look,
As, in the brake beside the stream, a deer
Looks at the hunter's snare with doubt and fear.
With weeping eyes, like a poor bleating lamb
That runs with trembling feet to find its dam,
She nestled closely to her Rama's side,
And in her soft low faltering accents cried:
'Tell me how hermits, dwelling in the wood,
Tie their bark mantles on.' Perplext she stood,
Shrinking in modest dread, while one small hand
Strove at the neck to join the rugged band.

Then, quickly hastening, Rama, first and best
Of Virtue's children, o'er her silken vest

Fastened the coat of bark. Then rose a cry
From all the women, and each tender eye
Dropt water: 'Rama, leave us Sita; she
Shares not the cruel doom that falls on thee.
Hear us, we pray thee; let thy Sita stay
To bless our sight while thou art far away.'

Then spoke the Sovereign's venerable guide,
Sainted Vasishtha, as he deeply sighed
Looking on Sita in her coat of bark:
'O cruel Queen Kaikeyi, fell and dark
In purpose, evil-hearted; thou disgrace
To thy great father and thy royal race:
Deceiver of thy lord, thy plots are vain;
For still will Sita in her home remain,
And sit as rightful ruler on the throne
Prepared for Rama, till he claim his own.
The pair who live in wedlock's sweet control
Form but one heart and mind and self and soul:
She, Rama's self, shall Rama's kingdom sway,
And we with joy her gentle rule obey.

If she resolve to share her husband's woes,
We all will follow where our lady goes.
Our wives and children, our young men and maids
Will roam with Rama through the forest glades :
Nay, thy son Bharat, and Satrughna too
Will to Ayodhya bid a long adieu,
Around their limbs the hermit's garb to fold,
And serve their elder brother as of old.
Do thou, rejoicing in the people's bane,
Enjoy, 'mid empty homes, thy lonely reign :
For 'tis no kingdom where our King is not ;
He makes an empire in the wildest spot.'

Sumantra, bowing with his reverent head,
Upraised his suppliant hands, to Rama said :
'My ready car, O royal Prince, ascend,
And where thou wilt, my rapid course I bend.'
With cheerful heart, her toilet task complete,
The Rose of women rose[1] and took her seat.
And Rama next and Lakshman true and bold
Sprang on the sun-bright chariot deckt with gold.

[1] *Áruroha varároha.*

Sumantra, mounted, urged each willing steed
Of noble lineage, like the wind for speed.

Then rose to heaven one universal shriek ;
And the whole city, old, young, strong, and weak
Rusht toward the car, as, from the scorching sun,
The panting herds to shaded water run.
Before the chariot and behind they hung,
And cried with weeping eyes, as there they clung ;
'O check thy steeds ; drive slower, we implore,
And let us see our Rama's face once more,
His mother's heart is surely barred with steel,
Or it had broken with the pangs we feel.
Sita, well done ! Videha's flower and pride,
Still, like his shadow, by thy husband's side,
Cheering his path with thy loved presence still,
As the sun never sets on Meru's hill.[1]
And thou, O Lakshman, shalt have honour too,
Serving thy brother with a love so true :
Yea, noblest honour for thy noble deeds,

[1] A sacred mountain placed by the Hindus in the centre of the seven continents of which the earth is made up. It is said to be 84,000 *yojanas* high (*a yojana* is reckoned variously at four and nine miles). Its summit is a residence of the God Brahma.

For this the path to heaven and bliss that leads.'

Thus in their sorrow cried the weeping throng :
'Drive on,' said Rama, 'we delay too long.'
From the men's eyes the tears in torrents flowed,
And laid the dust upon the royal road ;
While, in the woe that rent their bosoms, all
The women rained their tears, like drops that fall
From the drencht lotus-leaves upon the lake,
Which darting fish, glittering under, shake.
The King, as Rama from his sight was borne,
Fell like a Sal tree by the roots uptorn ;
And the loud wailing cry that rent the skies
Made Rama for a moment turn his eyes
Where his sad mother and her train stood round
His hapless father fainting on the ground.
Then, as a young thing in the meshes caught
Looks to its mother with a quick glance fraught
With utter anguish, bound by duty's chain,
Gazing in most intolerable pain,
One long last look of love and grief he cast,
Then urged the steeds till out of sight he past.

KAUSALYA'S LAMENT.

Then Queen Kausalya to her husband spake
With tears and sighs as though her heart would break :
'O thou whose glories through the wide worlds reach,
Gentle, compassionate, and kind of speech,
Think, how will Sita nursed with tender care,
And thy two sons, their grievous hardships bear !
How will our darling, framed of finest mould,
Endure the rain and wind, the heat and cold !
How in the woods her tender life sustain,
With no sweet viands, only fruit and grain !
How bear the ravening lion's voice of fear,
She, to whom music and the song were dear !
Where sleeps my Rama now? Ah ! cold his bed,
His arm the pillow of the Prince's head.

When shall I see him with his glorious hair,
Eyed like the lotus, like the lotus, fair?
Full well I know when years are past, and he
Returns from exile to his home and me,
His brother's leavings he will scorn, nor deign,
The rightful King, in Bharat's stead to reign:
The tasted morsel he will cast away:
The tiger feeds not on another's prey.
First on her lord, O King, the wife depends,
Next on her son, and then on kin and friends.
Thy love, my lord, 'twas never mine to win:
My son is banisht, far my kith and kin:
I had but these, and thou hast left me none,
Bereaved, forlorn, despised and all undone!'

THE HERMIT'S SON.

"But the exiles were no sooner gone than the aged monarch drooped in sadness. "Six days he sat and mourned, and pined for Rama all that weary time." In the middle of the seventh night a crime, inadvertently committed in his youth, rose up in his mind: he sought sympathy from Kausalya his first wife, the mother of the banished Rama, and asked her to listen to his tale, for to this he attributed his present affliction." MRS. SPEIR.

Heavy was his soul within him, still in Dasaratha's breast
Memory of woe kept brooding and forbade the King to rest.
Deep despair upon his spirit, mourning for his Rama, lay,
As when clouds have veiled the glory of the parting Lord of
Day.
As he thought with bitter anguish of the deed his hand had
done,
Spake he sorrowing to Kausalya sighing weeping for her son:

'Art thou waking, mournful lady? Give me all thy listening ear;
Hearken to a tale of sorrow, to an ancient deed of fear.
Surely each shall reap the harvest of his actions here below:
Righteous deed shall bear a blessing, sin shall ever bring forth woe.
'Tis a deed of youthful folly brings on me this evil day,
As a young child tasting poison eats his death in heedless play.
'Twas a day of early rain-time, filling my young soul with love,
When the sun had dried the earth-dews with his hot beams from above,
And in highest heaven returning journeyed on his southward road,
Speeding to the gloomy region, the Departed's sad abode.
Balmy cool the air was breathing, welcome clouds were floating by,
Humming bees with joyful music swelled the glad wild peacock's cry.
Their wing-feathers wet with bathing, birds slow flying to the trees

Rested in the topmost branches waving to the western breeze.
Like the Ocean many-twinkling, gold-shot with gay peacocks' sheen,
Gleaming with the fallen rain-drops, sea-bright all the hills were seen;
While like serpents, winding swiftly, torrents from the mountain's side
Hissed along, some brightly flashing, turbid some and ochre-dyed.
With my bow in that glad season to fair Sarju's stream I drove,
Bent to try my archer prowess in a dark and stately grove.
There I lay in ambush hidden by the river's reedy side,
Where the beasts that roam the forest sought at eve the cooling tide.
Hark! a sound of troubled water from the neighbouring stream I heard:
All was dark and still around me, not a breath the branches stirred.
Eager to lay low the monster forth a glittering shaft I drew;
Poisonous as serpent's venom from my string the arrow flew.
Then I heard a bitter wailing and a voice of direst pain
Calling out 'Ah me, unhappy! Dearest father, I am slain!'

Writhing on the bank in anguish sobbingly one cried 'Ah me!
Wherefore has this arrow smitten a poor harmless devotee?
Here at eve to fill my pitcher to this lonely stream I came:
Tell me whom I have offended, who my harmless act can
blame.
Who could have the heart to kill me, me the guiltless hermit's child,
Drinking from the stream and eating fruit and herbs he gathers wild?
Would the slayer strip my body? He will find but scanty
spoil:
Coat of bark and deerskin mantle hardly will repay his toil.
'Tis not for myself I sorrow: from mine aged parents torn,
Long their stay and only succour, 'tis for their sad fate I
mourn.
Who will feed them when I perish? Wretched man, whoe'er
thou art,
Thou hast murdered father, mother, offspring, all with one
fell dart.'
Horror seized my soul within me, and my mind had well-nigh fled,
In the stilly calm of evening as I heard the words he said.

Rushing forward through the bushes on the river-bank I spied
Lying low a young ascetic with my shaft deep in his side.
With his matted hair dishevelled, and his pitcher cast away,
From his side the life blood ebbing, smeared with dust and
gore he lay.
Then he fixt his eyes upon me: scarcely could my spirit
brook,
As these bitter words he uttered, that long last departing look:
'Only to fetch water came I: tell me, wherefore do I bleed?
Have I sinned against thee, Monarch? Done thee wrong in
word or deed?
Ah! I'm not thine only victim: cruel King, thy heedless dart
Pierces too a father's bosom and an aged mother's heart.
They, my parents, blind and feeble, from this hand alone can
drink:
When I come not, thirsting, hoping, sadly down in death they
'll sink.
Naught from lore of studied Scripture, naught from penance
do I gain,
For my hapless father knows not his dear son is lying slain.
Ah! and if he knew me dying powerless to save were he,
As a tree can never rescue from the axe a fated tree.

Hasten to him, son of Raghu. Tell my father of my fate.
Lest his wrath like fire consume thee. Hasten, ere it be too late.
There within the shady forest is my father's hermitage:
Go entreat him, son of Raghu, lest he curse thee in his rage.'
Thus he spake, and I down-kneeling, drew the arrow from his side:
Then the hermit, rich in penance, fixt his eyes on me and died.
Motionless I stood in sorrow: pondering in anxious thought
How to minister most kindly to the woe my hand had wrought.
From the stream I filled the pitcher, and, fast speeding through the wood,
Reached the middle of the forest where the lowly cottage stood.
Talking of their son's long absence, a poor aged sightless pair,
Like two birds with clipt wings, helpless, none to guide them, sat they there.
Sadly, slowly I approached them by my rash deed left forlorn;
Crusht with terror was my spirit, and my heart with anguish [torn.

At the sound of coming footsteps thus I heard the old man
say :
'Dear son, bring the water quickly : thou hast been too long
away.
Bathing in the stream, or playing, heedless how the minutes
past :
Come, thy mother longeth for thee. Come, and cheer her heart
at last.
Be not angry, mine own darling. Thou hast never vext us yet,
And if I have spoken harshly do forgive me and forget.
Thou art thy poor parents' succour, eyes art thou unto the
blind :
Speak, on thee our lives are resting. Why so silent and un-
kind ?'
Thus I heard, yet deeper grieving, and in fresh augmented
woe
Spake to the bereaved father with words faltering and slow :
'I am not thy son, O hermit, but the ruler of the land,
Plunged with thee in woe and mourning by my own accursed
hand.
There on Sarju's bank I wandered with my arrows and my
bow,

Bent to lay some prowling lion or a thirsty tiger low.
Then I heard a sound of drinking : all the place around was
dark,
But I sent the deadly arrow, Ah ! too truly to the mark.
Bounding swiftly from my ambush to the river's bank I hied,
Where a hermit's son lay dying with my arrow in his side.
Forth I drew the deadly weapon. Then his last lament was
given
To his aged helpless parents, and his spirit went to heaven.
Thus thy son, O saintly hermit, through my haste and folly
fell ;
Let deep sorrow win thy pardon for the deed I scarce can
tell.'
As he heard my mournful story, pouring down his aged cheek
Came the torrent of his sorrow, and his voice was low and
weak :
'King, hadst thou concealed this horror, this blood-shedding
left untold,
On thy head the sin had fallen with its fruit ten thousand-
fold.
For a Warrior stained with murder, of a hermit above all, [fall.
From his high estate, blood-guilty, were he Indra's self must

Lead us, King, by thee bereaved, lead us to the fatal place:
Let us fold our darling's body in a last and long embrace.'
By the hand I led the mourners to the river where he lay:
Fondly claspt the sightless parents in their arms the death-cold clay.
Bowed down by their load of sorrow sank they by the dead boy's side,
And the sage in lamentation lifted up his voice and cried:
'Hast thou not a greeting for me? Am not I thy father, dear?
Answer but one word, my darling. Wherefore art thou lying here?
Art thou angry with thy father? Speak to me, beloved one!
Surely thou wast ever duteous; look then on thy mother, son.
Come dear child, embrace thy father, put thy little hand in mine:
Let me hear thee sweetly prattle some fond playful word of thine.
Who will read me now the Scripture, filling my old heart with joy?
Who, when evening rites are ended, cheer me mourning for my boy?
Who will tend the helpless parents, fetch us water from the [spring?

Who will guide our feeble footsteps? Who will fruits and
berries bring?
Can I feed thine aged mother till her weary life is o'er?
Can I soothe her ever longing for the son who comes no more?
Stay, dear child, nor fly so quickly to grim Yama's dark abode;
Stay, thy father and thy mother will go with thee on the
road.
In the wild wood all deserted, none to aid us in our need,
Quickly will thine aged parents tread the path for all decreed.
Guiltless boy by sinner murdered, join thine own immortal
band
In the heaven of slaughtered heroes slain on earth by others'
hand.
Hasten to thy blissful mansion; welcome shalt thou be to
those
Who fell nobly here in battle with their bold front to their
foes.'

Then the funeral rites were finisht by the parents' loving
care,
And again the sage addrest me as I stood a suppliant there:
'Thou hast slain my well-beloved, killed mine only child, O
King:

Kill me too, the childless father : death no longer has a sting.
But thou shalt not go unpunisht. Wretched youth, thy breast shall know
Somewhat of the pangs I suffer, a bereaved father's woe.
Thus I lay my curse upon thee : for this slaughter done to-day
Thou for a dear son shalt sorrow, and thy life the debt shall pay.'

THE TRIAL OF TRUTH.

After Dasarath's death Bharata refused to accept the insignia of royalty, which according to Hindu law was the heritage of his elder brother. We are not told how his mother behaved when he thus refused to aid her wicked schemes for his advancement; but the Council resolved, that if he would not be King himself, he must go in pursuit of Rama, and persuade him to return and assume the sovereignty. The meeting between the brothers shows the utmost delicacy and generosity of feeling; Bharata lamenting his mother's ill conduct, and entreating Rama to return; Rama declining because unless he keeps his father's vow he cannot secure his father's happiness in heaven: he therefore adjures his brother to return to Ayodhya and "console the people and the twice-born. I with Sita and Lakshman will enter the forest of Dandaka. Be thou the King of men, I will be sovereign of wild beasts. Let the umbrella shade thy head, I will take refuge in the shade of the wood," MRS. SPEIR, *Life in Ancient India.*

'Urge me no more: thy words are fair,

But virtue's garb they falsely wear.

With pleasing art thy tongue misleads,

And lures me to ignoble deeds.

For what is might or ancient race,
The pomp of wealth, the pride of place?
'Tis virtue marks the line between
The great and good, the low and mean:
And he from virtue's path who strays
To wander in forbidden ways,
Whate'er his birth, must hope in vain
The praises of the good to gain.
Shall I the righteous path forsake,
The laws of duty foully break?
Be scorned by all the good and just,
And lay mine honour in the dust?
Shall Rama stain his soul with sin,
And lose the heaven he lives to win?
Nor would the crime with Rama end:
For countless lives on him depend.
The people in their Prince behold
Their best example, guide, and mould,
And, by his vice or virtue led,
The path he walks they strive to tread.
That truth and mercy still must be
Beloved of kings, is Heaven's decree:

Upheld by truth the monarch reigns ;
Nay, truth the very world sustains.
Truth evermore has been the love
Of saints below and Gods above ;
And endless bliss by truth is won
In Brahma's world boyond the sun.
For holy truth is root and spring
Of virtue and each lovely thing :
A mighty Lord supreme on earth,
Peerless for beauty, power, and worth :
A crown of glory still more fair
Than sacrifice and praise and prayer.
Shall I this heavenly gem despise,
Attracted by an earthly prize ?
Shall I, misled by lust of sway,
My father's order disobey ?
And, folly's dupe or passion's slave,
Force him to break the oath he gave ?
Shall I, to gain my royal right,
The clear command of duty slight ?
With lying lips my glory stain,
And basely sin for paltry gain ?

For not alone by hand and thought
The soul of man with crime is fraught:
Sin's meanest tool I count the third,
The tongue that speaks the lying word.
No, brother; urge this plea no more,
I still will keep the oath I swore:
Within the forest calmly dwell,
Contented with my hermit's cell,
Nor fail to give the Gods a share
Of offerings from my humble fare.'

CHITRAKUTA.

Rama, with Sita and Lakshman, has crossed the Ganges and the Jumna and reached the distant forest in which he is to live. He points out to Sita some of the beauties of the surrounding scenery, especially the mountain Chitrakuta and the river Mandakini.

'Though reft of power and kingly sway,
Though friends and home are far away,
I cannot mourn my altered lot,
Enraptured with this lovely spot.
Look, darling, on this noble hill,
Which sweet birds with their music fill:
Tinged with a thousand metal dyes,
His lofty summits kiss the skies.
Here gleams a line of silvery sheen,
There, a broad streak of emerald green;

And next a belt of gold is spread,
Made glorious by a fringe of red ;
While, higher as the peaks ascend,
Sunlight and flowers and crystal blend.
See, dear, the trees that clothe his side,
All lovely in their summer pride,
In richest wealth of leaves arrayed,
With flower and fruit and light and shade.
Look where the young Rose-apple glows ;
What loaded boughs the Mango shows !
See, waving in the western wind,
The light leaves of the Tamarind ;
And mark that giant Peepul through
Those feathery clumps of tall Bamboo.
That depth of shade, that open lawn,
Allure the wood-nymph and the faun ;
And, where those grassy glades extend,
The spirits of the air descend
To while the summer night away
With dalliance and mirth and play.
Look, from the mountain's woody head
Hangs many a stream like silver thread,

Till, gathering strength, each rapid rill
Leaps, lightly laughing, down the hill;
Then, bounding o'er the rocky wall,
Flashes the foamy waterfall.
O, lives there one too cold to feel
Delicious languor o'er him steal,
As the young morning breeze, that springs
From the cool cave on balmy wings,
Breathes round him, loaded with the scent
Of bud and blossom, dew-besprent!
See, round the hill, at random thrown,
Those masses of primeval stone
Of every shape and many a hue,
Yellow and black and red and blue.
But all is fairer still by night:
Each rock reflects a softer light,
When the whole mount, from foot to crest,
In robes of lambent flame is drest;
When, from a million herbs, a blaze
Of their own luminous glory plays,
And, clothed in fire, each deep ravine,
Each pinnacle and crag is seen.

Dear Sita, Chitrakuta's height
Transports me with such pure delight,
With thee and Lakshman here to dwell
For many a year would please me well.'

MANDAKINI.

'Home of the heron and the swan,
 See, the fair river glides,
With verdant isles to gem her breast,
 And flowers to deck her sides.
With every tree of sweetest fruit
 And fairest bloom that springs,
And glorious as the lucid stream
 Where bathes the King of Kings.[1]
How lovely are those shelving banks,
 Now dotted o'er with deer,
That sully, as they quench their thirst,
 The waves that were so clear.

[1] A title of Kuvera, the God of Wealth. The beauty of his pleasure grounds is proverbial.

Look, darling, to that point below,
Those holy hermits mark:
I know them by their matted hair
And by their coats of bark.
See, on the river bank they stand,
Their early bathing done;
Lifting their aged hands in prayer
They reverence the sun.
O look! the merry wind is up
And scatters leaves around:
The very mountain seems to dance
With bending forests crowned.
Behold the wavelets white with foam
As round the isles they whirl;
Here troubled by the bathing saints,
And there like orient pearl.
Look, scattered by the morning breeze.
What beds of blossoms lie,
And chaplets, cast upon the wave,
Are dancing swiftly by.
Hark to the wild-duck's merry call
Amid the reeds at play:

Hark to the joyous mallard's note
Responsive far away.
My life in fair Ayodhya's town
Was not so sweet to me
As gazing on this lovely flood,
That glorious hill, and thee.
Bathe in the gentle stream, to her
With friendly love repair,
And pluck her lilies in thy play,
And twine them in thy hair.
This mount, with all its savage life,
Ayodhya's city deem,
And on this beauteous river look
As our own Sarju's stream.
O Sita, I am wild with joy,
So rare a lot is mine,
Cheered by a duteous brother's care,
And loved with love like thine,'

THE RAPE OF SITA.

"Ravana, finding it in vain to hope to succeed without the aid of stratagem, took with him an assistant sorcerer, disguised as a deer; and as Rama took great pleasure in the chase, it was not difficult for the deer to lure him from his cottage in pursuit. He did not leave his beloved Sita without charging Lakshman, his brother, to remain in charge; but the wily deer knew how to defeat his precaution, and when transfixed by Rama's arrow he cried out in the voice of Rama, "Oh, Lakshman, save me!" Sita heard the cry, and entreated Lakshman to fly to his brother's rescue. He was unwilling to go, but yielded to her earnestness and she was left alone." MRS. SPEIR, *Life in Ancient India.*

As, when the sun and moon their empire leave,

Black night descends upon the widowed eve;

So Ravan, watching for the lovely prize—

His form concealed in roaming Brahman's guise—

Dre wnear to Sita, in the cottage left,

Far from her guardians, of all aid bereft.

All life was husht, and, as the fiend came near,
No leaflet stirred, the wind was still through fear;
And his red eye held, powerless to flee,
The trembling waters of Godaveri.
Unholy guest in holy guise he came,
Close to the side of Rama's mourning dame:
Like a dark well with treacherous weeds o'ergrown,
Like Saturn when his baleful rays are thrown
Upon the fairest star of all the sky.
Thus the night-rover with his evil eye
Looked on the lonely lady as she wept
Within her leafy home. Awhile he kept
His gaze upon her beauty, for it fed
Upon the splendour of white teeth, the red
Of luscious lips, the light of eyes that through
Their long soft lashes, moistened with the dew
Of weeping, glorified a face fair-browed,
Pure as the moon shining without a cloud.

Then Ravan cried, pierced by Love's fiery dart:
'Speak, marvellous beauty, tell me who thou art,

All lonely here, in silken robes arrayed,
Wearing a lotus wreath thy brows to shade.
What heavenly being do mine eyes behold,
Fairer and brighter than the finest gold?
Fame? Beauty? Modesty?—No less I ween,
Or sweet Desire, young Love's voluptuous queen?
Red are thy lips, thy teeth are small and white,
Thy tender eyes are large and soft and bright.
No child of earth could wear a smile so sweet,
And O, the wonder of thy perfect feet!
Robes cannot hide the glories of thy breast,
And fancy faintly pictures all the rest.
Sweet Queen, these eyes have never seen till now
Sylph, nymph, or Goddess half so fair as thou.
This savage wood befits thee, lady, ill,
Where wild fiends roam, changing their form at will.
On some smooth terrace should thy couch be spread,
In gardens sweet with blooms thy feet should tread.
A royal robe thy peerless form should deck,
And priceless gems sparkle upon thy neck.
The choicest wreath should bind thy glorious hair,
A matchless lord thy bed of love should share.

Who art thou, Goddess? but no heavenly maid
Loves this wild wood: beneath this gloomy shade
No nymph or gentle spirit seeks to roam;
This is the giant's haunt, the lion's home.
Dost thou not dread, so delicate and fair,
The tiger near thee and the wolf and bear?
Whose and who art thou? Tell me, whence and why
Thou comest hither, with no guardian nigh.'

He ceased. The lady, by his garb beguiled,
With fearless innocence looked up and smiled.
She bade the seeming Brahman to a seat,
And gave him water for his weary feet;
And, still intent on hospitable care,
Brought forth the choicest of her woodland fare.
She by the cottage-door expecting stood
To see her lord returning through the wood;
But naught save boundless trees her gazes met:
Rama and Lakshmau, lingering, came not yet.
And then she told him what he sought to know,
Her name, her lineage, all her weal and woe:

The Monarch's promise, and Kaikeyi's hate,
The fatal oath, and grief that came too late.
'And now,' she said, 'declare thy name and race,
'And why thou roamest to this lonely place.'

She spoke. The stranger thundered in reply :
'Terror of men and Gods and worlds am I,
Ravan, whose will the gaint hosts obey.
Since I have seen thee, lovely one, to-day,
Clad in silk raiment, bright as polisht gold,
My love for all my wives is dead and cold.
Though countless dames of perfect beauty, torn
From many a pillaged realm, my home adorn,
Come, fairest, come, my queen and darling be :
Among a thousand I will love but thee.
My city Lanka like a glittering crown
Looks from the high brow of a mountain down
On restless Ocean, who with flash and foam
Beats in wild rage against mine island-home.
There pleasant gardens shall thy steps invite
With me to wander when the moon is bright ;

There in new joys thy breast shall ne'er retain
One faint remembrance of this place of pain.'

Then from her breast the noble fury broke;
With flashing eye and quivering lip she spoke:
'Me, me, the faithful wife of Rama, him
Before whose glory Indra's fame is dim:
Rama, who quails not in the battle-shock,
Fierce as the Ocean, stedfast as the rock:
Rama, the lord of each auspicious sign;
Rama, the glory of his princely line;
Me, Rama's wife, the dear fond wife of him,
Him of the eagle eye, the lordly limb—
Me dost thou dare with words of love to press,
A jackal suing to a lioness?
As far above thine impious reach am I
As yonder sun that blazes in the sky.
Ha! thou hast seen those air-drawn trees of gold,
That sign of doom which dying eyes behold,
If thou hast ventured, weary of thy life,
To look with eyes of love on Rama's wife.

Fool! thou hadst better strive to rend away
The serpent's venomed fang, the lion's prey;
To steal the Blessed Tree that blooms on high,
To drink fell poison and not fear to die.
Fool! with a needle's point thine eye to prick;
Fool! with thy tongue a razor's edge to lick.
Thou, tempt the wife of Rama! Better leap,
A millstone round thy neck, from Lanka's steep
Into the raging sea and strive to swim
From shore to shore than tempt the wife of him.
Thou, win his wife! With lighter labour try
To pluck the sun and moon from yonder sky;
Safer to wrap within thy robe the flame
Than woo to folly Rama's faithful dame.
As the vast ocean to a trickling rill,
As Meru's mountain to the meanest hill;
The Feathered Monarch to the skulking bat,
The lordly lion to the crawling cat:
As sandal perfume to the common mire;
As gold found perfect by the testing fire
To homely iron and dull lumps of lead:
As the gay peacock, with his plumes outspread,

To the shy moping solitary owl :
As the proud swan is to the meanest fowl
That dips his wings, unnoticed, in the sea—
So is my Rama to a thing like thee.'

Out burst the giant, with a furious frown :
'Hast thou not heard of Ravan's high renown ?
Ne'er heard the glory and the might of me
Before whose face celestial armies flee ?
Whom all the Gods, with Indra at their head,
Fear like the ruthless Monarch of the Dead ;
Before whose eye the sun and moon grow pale,
And silent horror checks the shuddering gale,
That every leaflet on the tree is still,
Husht every ripple of the babbling rill.
Beyond the sea my glorious city stands,
Lanka the famous, raised by giant hands :
Like Indra's city beautiful and bright
With golden walls and gates of lazulite.
There every flower of rarest odour blows,
And luscious fruit on loaded branches glows ;

There is the sound of cymbal and of drum :
Tarry not, Sita, but arise and come !
Come, and with me all earthly pleasures share ;
Nay, heavenly joys, my love, shall bless thee there.'

He ceased ; and, changing all his gentle guise,
Stood before Sita in his native size,
A monstrous giant, terrible in form,
Dark as a thunder-cloud that leads the storm.
Ten-faced and twenty-armed, in every head
Glared the wild eyeballs that his rage made red,
As with a scowl upon each haughty brow,
He cried : 'Fair Sita, wilt thou scorn me now ?
Lift thy sweet eyes, dear child of earth, and see
A husband worthy of a queen like thee.'
One eager hand her glorious tresses graspt,
One mighty arm around her waist was claspt.
Aid her, ye Spirits ! Ah, all wild with dread
Each nymph and faun before the fiend had fled.
Where, where is Rama ? Rama roams afar,
And Ravan bears her to his magic car.

With angry threats the giant tried to still
Her cries for aid, but very long and shrill
Rang forth her lamentation through the air,
As of one raving in her great despair:
'Help, Rama, help! O Lakshman, where art thou?
Why, faithful champion, art thou heedless now?
My hero, wont the giants' pride to tame,
Tear from their impious hands thy brother's dame!
She who drove Rama from his promised throne
Will doubly triumph when this deed is known.
Ye happy bowers, ye bloomy groves farewell!
My mournful fate to royal Rama tell!
And thou Godaveri, dear stream, upon
Whose bosom float the mallard and the swan,
Forget not her who loves thee, but relate
To royal Rama Sita's mournful fate.
Ye gentle fauns to whom this wood is dear,
Let Rama from your airy voices hear
That Ravan tears me hence! On you, on all
The countless life within these shades I call:
Say that the fiend has borne away his wife,
His own true Sita, dearer than his life;

He will regain the spouse he loves so well,
Yea, if they bore her to the depths of Hell.'

Down to her feet her loosened tresses hung,
As, like a creeper, with twined arms she clung
To bough and branch, and falling on her knees
Shrieked out for succour to the mighty trees.
Then Ravan's giant hand, unused to spare,
Seized her again by her long flowing hair:
Vengeance on thee that cursed touch shall bring,
And stain with gore thy hair, thou impious King.
All nature trembled, faint and sick with dread,
And sudden darkness o'er the world was spread;
The wind was husht, dimmed was the glorious sun;
An awful voice that cried, The deed is done,
Burst from the mighty Sire, whose sleepless eye
Saw the fell outrage from his throne on high;
And the pure saints, with mingled joy and awe,
Looked on the sinner and his doom foresaw.
In vain she struggled, as the giant threw
His arm around her waist and upward flew.

With yellow robes, far floating uncontrolled,
And fair limbs glowing like the burnisht gold,
The royal lady like the lightning shone,
Too dazzling lovely to be looked upon.
Toucht by the glorious light the giant's frame
Showed like a mountain belted round with flame ;
And from the lotus wreath that crowned her head
Light falling petals on his limbs were shed.
Widowed of Rama and of joy, her face
Peered in its lovely sadness from the embrace
Of her fell ravisher. So looks the moon
With pure light cleaving a dark cloud in June.

RAMA'S DESPAIR.

Rama returns to his cottage and finds it empty. Sita, his love, his life, is gone. He had borne the loss of father, mother, home, and friends, but beneath this shock the hero's reason gives way.

Then Rama turning, with love-quickened pace,
Eager to look upon his Sita's face,
Came to his dwelling. But he found her not ;
Lonely and empty was the leafy cot,
Like a sad streamlet in the winter's frost
With all the glory of its lilies lost.
He searcht, he called: no answering voice was heard,
But a faint shudder that the branches stirred ;
And sad with woe each tree and bird and flower
Mourned round the ruin of the lady's bower ;

And nymph and faun in shady thickets sighed.

And Rama lifted up his voice and cried:
'Where is my darling? Dead, or torn away?
Or has she ventured in the wood to stray
Gathering flowers farther and farther still?
Or has she sought the stream, her jar to fill?'
Through grove and glade he ran with maddened brain,
Seeking her wildly where all search was vain.
From brook to brook, from hill to hill he ran,
Each tree to question and each lawn to scan:
'Tell me, Acacia, has that fairest she,
Who loved thy flowers so well, been seen by thee?
Clad in pale silk and like thy clusters, fair,
If thou hast seen my darling, tell me where!
Thou Bel tree, laden with thy golden fruit
Round as my lady's breast, why art thou mute?
Where is she, Heartsease? 'Tis thy gentle part
To banish woe, come give me what thou art.
Thou Cassia, brilliant with thy pendent gold,
Tell me what shades my radiant Sita hold.

Palm, Mango, Jasmine, Amaranth, declare,
Where is my darling with the long soft hair?
It may be that my fawn-eyed love has strayed
To sport with fawns beneath some arching shade.
I see thee dearest: come, no longer seek
To hide thee in the grove; come forth or speak!
I see thee, lady of the lotus eye,
Thou art not hidden, and 'tis vain to fly.
Stay if thou lovest me, my Sita, stay!
Too much already of this cruel play.
I see thy garment shimmer in the brake:
Stay, my sweet darling, for dear pity's sake!

Ah! she is dead; her mangled limbs the feast
Of wandering giant or some ravenous beast;
That moon-bright cheek, that pure and polisht brow,
Red lips and dazzling teeth—what are they now?
Tossing her arms—her spray-soft arms—in vain,
Shrieking for help, alas! my love was slain.
Why wast thou left within thy bower alone,
For fiends to rend thee, oh, mine own, mine own?

My Sita lost I will not live, but go
Hence to the after-world weighed down by woe.
The mighty King, our sire, will see me there,
And sternly cry, 'False, perjured Rama, where,
Where is thy faith, that thou, with evil speed,
Comest from exile ere the time decreed?'
Can I return from banishment to see
Those chambers empty where my queen should be?
Can I return to hear my people cry
Shame on the wretch who failed to save or die?
How can I meet Videha's King, and brook
The speechless agony of the father's look?
How will these lips endure to tell him all?
These eyes, to see him start and faint and fall?
Now leave me here to mourn awhile and die:
Do thou dear brother, to Ayodhya hie,
The beautiful city; thus to Bharat say,
With tender greeting: 'Rama bids thee sway
The righteous sceptre thou deservest well.'
Then, after reverent salutation, tell
With soothing words my mother, his, and thine,
The mournful tale of Sita's fate and mine.'

SITA IN PRISON.

As some poor solitary deer,
When eager dogs are pressing near,
Lies sobbing in an alien wood
Far from her soft-eyed sisterhood;
So in King Ravan's hall, a prey
To fear and anguish, Sita lay,
With none to aid her in distress,
Girt round by many a giantess.

Pierced by the shaft of Love, the King
Strode to the centre of the ring.
He bade the captive lady rise,
And, lifting up her streaming eyes,
View all the glorious house that vied
With heavenly homes in pomp and pride:

Hall, bower, and chamber, bright with throngs
Of gay-robed dames, and cheered with songs
Of countless birds, whose swelling throats
Blent sweetly their delicious notes
From gold and crystal pillars bright
With studs of pearl and lazulite.
Near lay a royal garden, fair
With terrace, lawn, and gay parterre,
Where roses glowed and peacocks played,
Delighted, in the Mango's shade.
Like cloudy pile, in skies of June,
That hides the path of sun and moon;
Or soaring up like Meru's head
All flaming with the morning's red,
So vast, so high that palace raised
Sky-cleaving pinnacles, and blazed
In the sun's path, from floor to spire
A shape of beauty clothed in fire.

He led her up the stair whereon,
Inlaid in gold, large diamonds shone,

And to her eyes that marked not showed
The glory of his rich abode:
The lattice with its ivory frame,
Where softened light through silver came;
And curtains, bound with golden braid,
Cast on the floor a rosy shade:
The car, obedient to his will,
That bore him over flood and hill:
Long galleries and stately halls
Where pictures lived upon the walls:
The mazy rill that murmured round
The grotto and the pleasure-mound:
Pools where the lily flushed, the lake
Where played the cygnet and the drake.
Thus with delight, from view to view,
The undelighted dame he drew,
And, as she trembled by his side,
'Look, Sita!' at each step he cried.
'Now, fair one, learn my power and might:
Ten million Rovers of the Night,
And lesser fiends, a countless band,
Millions of millions, round me stand,

Who joy in fight and scorn to fly:
Of all this host sole lord am I.
Whose army is so vast and bold?
What king so rich in gems and gold?
What earthly city can compare
With Lanka, fairest of the fair?
To thy sweet hand I yield the whole,
O dearer than my life and soul.
Thousands of women wait my sign:
O large-eyed, be their queen and mine.
My earnest prayer no longer spurn,
For Love's hot fires within me burn.
Sea-girt, three hundred leagues in length,
My Lanka lies, and if the strength
Of heavenly hosts her walls assail,
Though Indra lead, their might would fail.
No spirit of the earth or air,
No God can with my strength compare.
No longer let thy fancy dwell
On Rama in his hermit cell;
Leave the poor mortal to his fate,
And wed thee with a worthier mate.

Thy youth will not for ever stay,
Come, use it ere it glide away.
Nor let vain hopes thy breast beguile
Of rescue from the Giants' isle.
Less vain the toil that sought to tame
The glory of the quenchless flame:
Less vain the toil that strove to bind
The gale that wanders swift as mind.
Man, fiend, or God would find it hard
To rescue thee whom I would guard.
Spurn not, fair Queen, a realm like this,
But dwell with me and reign in bliss.
Thy hermit life has washed away
What stain upon thy bright soul lay;
Now come, with me enjoy the meed
Of each high thought and noble deed.
What! still reluctant, cold, and coy,
Still loving grief and hating joy!
Hear, lady of the faultless brow,
Ravan ne'er stooped so low till now.
Down at thy perfect feet I kneel,
And pity beg for all I feel:

My head beneath thy feet, I crave
Some mercy for thy loving slave.'

'My large-eyed Rama, dear to fame,
Of mighty arm and lion frame,
And Lakshman, will not tarry long,
But slay thee though thy walls are strong.
Soon will he hurry on thy track,
And with thy life take Sita back.
Small aid 'gainst him thy hosts will bring,
Like snakes seized by the Feathered King,
Though they be terrible and fierce.
The arrows from his bow will pierce
Thy body through, from flank to flank,
As Ganga rends away the bank.
Though girt by hosts of demon shape,
Thou canst not from his hand escape.
Thou, when he holds thee with his eye,
Scorcht with his shafts shalt fall and die.
He who can dry the mighty deep
May bid poor Sita moan and weep,

But the great sun shall cease to shine
Ere her pure soul to sin incline.
Repent, ere yet it be too late,
The crime thy death shall expiate,
Or soon shall seas of blood be spilt,
And widowed Lanka mourn thy guilt.
When Rama's shaft has laid thee low,
Far other words thy tongue shall know :
Thou scarcely then wilt boast in pride
That thou hast torn me from his side.
He comes; and 'neath his anger all,
Thyself, thy host, thy town shall fall.
I spurn thee: can the altar dight
With vessels for the sacred rite,
O'er which the priest his prayer has said,
Be sullied by an outcast's tread?
My body lies within thy power:
Torture it, chain it, kill, devour;
Ne'er will I meet thy base desire,
Or lay mine honour in the mire.'

With looks of fury Ravan cried,

'Come, Ogresses, and tame her pride.'
He spoke; and quicker than the word,
The coming of the fiends was heard.
Shuddered the air as on they sped,
And the earth shook beneath their tread.
Before their lord they humbly bowed,
And pressed round Sita in a crowd.
'To the Asoka garden bear
My prize,' he cried, 'and guard her there,
Until her stubborn pride be bent
By mingled threat and blandishment:
See that ye watch her well, and tame,
Like some wild thing, the haughty dame.'
They bore her to that garden, bright
With every flower that charms the sight,
Where sweet streams under branches flowed,
And fruit through all the seasons glowed.
Prostrate, before those fiendish eyes,
Like a poor trembling deer that lies
Beneath a tiger's paw, she lay
Thinking of Rama far away.

RAMA IN THE SPRING.

"I sought thee there,
And, mourning for my darling, scarce could bear
The sweet cool smell of lakes and pleasant showers,
The beauty and the perfume of the flowers,
And all delights of sight, and sound, and smell;
For, without Sita, Heaven itself were Hell."

KALIDASA.

'Look, brother, at that grove,' he cried,
'That lines sweet Pampa's shelving side.
Those trees of giant girth that rear
Their heads so high, like hills appear.
These are the pleasant days that fire
The youthful bosom with desire;

When soft winds, breathing balm, dispense
Wood odours that enthral the sense,
And pour a ceaseless rain of flowers
As drops the cloud his summer showers.
Look, even as I speak, my head
Is covered with the blooms they shed.
How soft the west wind moves along
To music of the wild bee's song;
His breath is of the woodland spring,
The sandal's odour lades his wing.
Look up, there hardly glimmers through
These arching trees one speck of blue.
Look there, the Cassia's bloom behold,
A giant clad in burning gold.
O happy spring, whom birds rejoice
To welcome with their gladdest voice!
O happy time, but not to me,
For I am wandering far from thee,
My darling of the large soft eye.
That Koïl with his loud shrill cry
Of joy and freedom and desire
That the first days of spring inspire,

Seems calling, as he cheers his mate,
To me all lone and desolate.[1]
See, where the joyous mallard leads
His partner through that fringe of reeds.
Each happy bird, and none alone,
Hails the spring air with gladdest tone,
All revelling in bliss alike,
The swan, the hawk, the dove, the shrike.
Look, brother, in that shady glen
The peacock dances round his hen:
No giant's hand has reft away
The mate with whom he loves to play.
There, round the Mango blossom, press
Wild bees, with lovers' eagerness.
But Ah! the blissful life around,
Each lovely sight, each pleasant sound,
Pierces my very heart, and slays
With memory of perisht days,
That flew in heavenly rapture by
With Sita of the roe-deer's eye!'

[1] "Thou 'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird
That sings beside thy mate." BURNS.

TIDINGS OF SITA.

'As on the breezy hill I stood,
That rises o'er the pathless wood,
High o'er me flew a monstrous form,
Dark as the cloud that heralds storm.
I saw the giant's flashing eye ;
I heard a woman's piteous cry.
A voice from out the still air came
Of weeping mixt with Rama's name.
A dove, whom eagle talons grasp,
She struggled in the giant's clasp.
I heard again a wilder shriek :
She saw me on the mountain peak.

An ànklet from her foot she drew,
And with it cast her garland too.
The token I have guarded well
Some tidings of thy love may tell.'

Quick to the mountain cave he went,
And brought the treasured ornament.
Then burst the tear from Rama's eyes,
As, gazing on the well-known prize,
'O Sita, O my love!' he said;
Then swooned and fell as fall the dead.

RAVAN'S PALACE.

Hanuman, the son of the Wind-God and the ally of Rama, enters Lanka by night in search of Sita. There he sees Pushpaka, the magic car, which contains the palace of the King of the Giants.

Then sweetly to his ear were borne
The blended notes of drum and horn,
Cymbal and tabour, deep and loud,
Like thunder from a distant cloud.
Awhile he stood, then nearer drew,
Till flasht upon his startled view
The car of Ravan, long and wide,
A measured league from side to side:
The car that flew o'er flood and hill
Obedient to the master's will.

Its jewelled arches high o'erhead
An ever-changing lustre shed
From ruby, pearl, and every gem,
On golden pillars under them.
Delicious came the tempered air
That breathed a heavenly summer there,
Stealing through bloomy trees that bore
Each pleasant fruit in endless store.
Enclosed within that pearly bound,
The wondering chief a palace found,
Of vast extent and stately height
With doors of gold and lazulite,
And deckt with every lovely thing,
The mansion of the Giant King.
No check was there from jealous guard,
No door was fast, no portal barred;
Only a sweet air breathed to meet
The stranger, as a host should greet
A wanderer of his kith and kin,
And woo his weary steps within.
He stood within a spacious hall
With fretted roof and painted wall,

The giant Ravan's boast and pride,
Loved even as a lovely bride.
'Twere long to tell each marvel there,
The crystal floor, the jewelled stair,
The gold, the silver, and the shine
Of chrysolite and almandine.
There breathed the fairest blooms of spring,
There flasht the proud swan's silver wing,
The splendour of whose feathers broke
Through fragrant wreaths of aloe smoke.
''Tis Indra's Heaven,' the chieftain cried,
Gazing in joy from side to side:
'The home of all the Gods is this:
The mansion of eternal bliss!'
There were the softest carpets spread,
Delightful to the sight and tread,
Where troops of fairest women lay
O'ercome by sleep, fatigued with play.
The cup no longer cheered the feast;
The sound of revelry had ceased;
The tinkling feet no longer stirred;
No chiming of a zone was heard.

So when each bird has sought her nest,
And swans are mute and wild bees rest,
Sleep the fair lilies of the lake
Till the sun's kiss shall bid them wake.
Like the calm field of autumn's sky
Which stars unnumbered glorify,
So shone the tyrant's sumptuous room
With living stars that chased the gloom.
'These are the stars,' the chieftain cried,
'In summer nights that earthward glide;
In brighter form they re-appear.
To shine in matchless lustre here,'

With wondering eyes awhile he viewed
Each graceful form and attitude.
One lady's head was backward thrown,
Bare was her arm and loosed her zone.
The garland that her brow had graced
Hung closely round another's waist.
Here gleamed two little feet, all bare
Of anklets that had sparkled there.

Here lay a queenly dame at rest
In all her glorious garments drest.
There slept another whose small hand
Had loosened every tie and band.
In careless grace another lay
With gems and jewels cast away,
Like a young creeper when the tread
Of the wild elephant has spread
Destruction and confusion round,
And hurled it flowerless to the ground.
Here lay a slumberer still as death,
Save only that her balmy breath
Raised ever and anon the lace
That floated o'er her sleeping face.
There, sunk in sleep, an amorous maid
Her sweet head on a mirror laid,
Like a fair lily bending till
Her petals float upon the rill.
Another black-eyed damsel pressed
Her lute upon her heaving breast,
As through her happy arms were twined
Round him for whom she long had pined.

Another pretty sleeper round
A silver vase her arms had wound,
That seemed—so fresh and fair and young—
A wreath of flowers that o'er it hung.

In sweet disorder lay a throng
Weary of dance and play and song:
Where heedless girls had sunk to rest,
One pillowed on another's breast,
Her tender cheek scarce seen beneath
Red roses of the falling wreath,
The while her long soft hair concealed
The beauties that her friend revealed.
With limbs at random interlaced
Round arm and leg and throat and waist,
That wreath of women lay asleep
Like blossoms in a careless heap.

KUMBHAKARNA.

"Kumbhakarna, the gigantic brother of the titanic Ravan,—named from the size of his ears which could contain a *Kumbha* or large water-jar—had such an appetite that he used to consume six months' provisions in a single day. Brahma, to relieve the alarm of the world, which had begun to entertain serious apprehensions of being eaten up, decreed that the giant should sleep six months at a time and wake for only one day during which he might consume his six months' allowance without trespassing unduly on the reproductive capabilities of the earth. When Rama invaded the capital of Ravan, the titans, requiring all their forces, employed the most violent measures—and eventually with success—to wake the sleeping giant."

With troubled spirit and with broken pride
Through Lanka's gate the vanquisht Ravan hied,
Crusht like an elephant who falls beneath
The lion's spring, and feels the murderous teeth;
Or like a serpent 'neath the furious wing
And vengeful talons of the Feathered King.

Such was the giant's fear and wild alarm
At the swift arrows shot by Rama's arm—
Shafts, with the flame of lightning round them curled,
Like Brahma's fiery bolts that end the world.
At length, supported on his golden throne,
With failing eye he spoke and humbled tone:
'Alas! ye Giants, all the toil is vain,
Fruitless my penance and an age of pain,
If I, whom Indra's self confest his peer,
Secure from Gods, a mortal victor fear.
My soul remembers—now, alas! too late—
The words of Brahma which foretold my fate:
'Tremble, proud Giant,' thus the warning ran,
'And fear destruction from unheeded man.
Secure from God and fiend and angel, live,
From faun and serpent, by the boon I give.
Against their power and might thy life is charmed,
Against man only is thy soul unarmed.'
'Too well I know the fated hour is nigh:
Then let each leader to his station fly.
Guard every alley with a chosen band,
Let giant warders on the rampart stand,

And let the terror of immortal eyes,
Great Kumbhakarna, from his trance arise.
He in deep slumber, free from care and pain,
Lulled by a charm for many a month has lain.
Let him arise, our bravest, best of all,
And soon the foemen 'neath his arm will fall.'
The giant hosts their monarch's word obeyed,
And left his presence trembling and afraid.
They carried flowery garlands, sweet and fresh,
And, for his banquet, loads of blood and flesh.
They reacht the cavern where the slumberer lay—
A mighty cave that stretcht a league each way :
But scarce the strongest could an entrance gain,
So fierce the tempest as he breathed amain.
They found the giant lying on his bed
With his huge limbs at all their length outspread,
Before his face they piled his favorite cheer,
The flesh of buffaloes and boars and deer.
With garlands, heavenly fair, they fanned his face,
And clouds of incense sweetened all the place.
Then moon-bright conchs they sounded loud and long,
And the cave echoed with the giant's song.

Then on their breasts they smote with thundering blows,
And higher yet the wild commotion rose,
When the loud cymbal vied with drum and horn,
And fiendish war-cries on the gale upborne
Through all the air in hideous discord spread,
And the birds heard the din and fell down dead.
But Kumbhakarna calmly took his rest:
And they smote fiercely on his shaggy chest
With maces, clubs, and pieces of the rock,
But still he moved not yet nor felt the shock.
Then all united in one effort more
With shell, drum, tabor, and redoubled roar;
Club, mace, staff, mallet, with strong arms applied,
Rained vigorous blows upon his breast and side;
And screaming elephants were urged to aid,
And beaten camels groaned and horses neighed.
But Kumbhakarna calmly slumbered still.
Then furious wrath began their breasts to fill:
They drencht his forehead with a hundred pails,
They tore his ears and hair with teeth and nails;
They bound together many a murderous mace,
And beat him wildly on the head and face,

And drove wild elephants, with ponderous tread,
Over his mighty limbs and chest and head.
The unusual weight the giant's slumber broke;
He shook his sides and started and awoke ;
And, all regardless of the wounds and blows,
Yawning with thirst and faint with hunger, rose.
His jaws like hell gaped terrible and wide,
Red as the sun when glaring o'er the side
Of Meru. Every burning breath he drew
Roared like a mighty wind that rushes through
The cedars on the mountain. Up he raised
His horselike head, with eyes that fiercely blazed
Like comets ; horrible as Death in form
When menacing the worlds with fire and storm.
The giants pointed to the reeking store
Of flesh of buffalo and deer and boar,
And the fiend gorged him with the flesh and blood,
Huge jars of marrow and of wine a flood.
He ended ; and the giants ventured near,
And bent their heads in reverence and fear,
And Kumbhakarna looked around with eyes
All glazed and heavy in their first surprise,

And drowsy yet from his late troubled rest
He thus the Rovers of the Night addrest :
'Why have ye called me from my sleep to wake ?
None with light cause my rest should dare to break.
Say, is it well with Ravan ? Or has need
And fear come on ye, that with heedless speed
Ye thus disturb me ? Mark the words I say,
The giants' King shall tremble in dismay,
The fire be quencht and Indra's self be slain,
Ere he shall rouse me from my sleep in vain.'
The wise Yupaksha humbly thus replied :
'No fiend has dared us, and no God defied.
But gathered men our golden walls assail,
And fear is on us lest their might prevail.
For Rama leads them to the deadly strife,
Burning for vengeance for his ravisht wife.
The hostile flame through Lanka's town is red,
And Ravan weeps his best and dearest dead.
Nay, e'en our King who never trembled yet
For heavenly hosts or fiends in battle met,
Himself at last the general dread has shared,
By Rama vanquisht and by Rama spared.'

Then Kumbhakarna thus in answer spake :
'I will go forth, and deadly vengeance take,
And tread their armies 'neath my conquering feet ;
Then, flusht with victory, the King will meet.
The princes' blood shall be my special draught ;
By you the gore of all the host be quaffed.'

THE OMENS.

Fierce as he who rules the dead,
Ravan forth to battle sped;
Chieftains of his giant band
Followed close on either hand.
Scarce the city gates were past
When the sun was overcast:
Darkness fell on all around,
Roared the clouds and shook the ground.
Startled coursers fled amain
Mid a shower of bloody rain.
Vultures, with ill-omened wing,
Smote the banner of the King;

While the jackal's hungry cry
Echoed as the car flew by.
Throbbing eye and aching arm
Struck him with a wild alarm:
Pallor sat upon his cheek,
And his voice grew low and weak.
Terrible with flash and flame
Down a hissing meteor came.
Birds that haunt the carnage field
Round the head of Ravan wheeled;
While his steeds, as on they swept
To the brunt of battle, wept.
Still the maddened King in spite
Of the omens rushed to fight;
Still by Yama's hand impelled
Toward his fate his course he held.
Earth beneath his chariot shook,
Hill and forest, cave and brook.

RAVAN DEAD.

Soon as they saw their leader dead,
The giants turned and broke and fled ;
Some to the hill, the wood, the cave,
Some leapt into the ocean wave.
Some sad for wife and children's fate
Ran to their home through Lanka's gate.
Poor welcome there in weeping eyes,
The groans of age, and children's cries.
Behind the routed, fierce and strong
As lions prest the victor throng :
From street to street in quest they strayed,
And all the marvels there surveyed :
Eight gates that blazed with gems and gold,
Eight walls that girt the giant's hold ;

And domes and spires that flasht on high
Like sun-shot clouds in autumn's sky.

Vibhishan with a brother's grief
Wept o'er the body of the chief:
'O hero, bold and brave!' he cried,
'Skilled in all arms, in battle tried!
Spoiled of thy crown, with limbs outspread,
Why wilt thou press this gory bed?
Why sleep upon the earth's cold breast,
When silken couches woo to rest?
Ah me, my brother! over-bold,
Thine is the fate my heart foretold;
But love and pride forbade to hear
The friend who blamed thy wild career.
Fallen is our sun that shone so bright;
Our lordly moon is veiled in night:
Our beacon fire is dead and cold;
A hundred waves have o'er it rolled.
What could his light and fire avail
Against Lord Rama's arrowy hail?

Woe for the giants' royal tree,
Whose stately height was fair to see!
His buds were deeds of kingly grace;
His bloom, the sons who deckt his race.
His penance was the glorious fruit,
And his own noble soul the root.
With rifled bloom and mangled bough
The royal tree lies prostrate now!'

'Nay, idly mourn not,' Rama cried,
'The warrior chief has nobly died.
Intrepid hero, firm through all,
So fell he as the brave should fall;
And ill beseems it men like us
To weep for those who perish thus.
Be firm: thy causeless grief restrain,
And pay the dues that yet remain.'

Again the sad Vibhishan spoke:
'His was the hero's arm that broke
Embattled Gods and Indra's might,
Unconquered ere to-day in fight.

He rushed against thee, strove, and fell,
As Ocean, when his waters swell,
Hurling his might against the rock,
Falls spent and shattered by the shock.
Woe for our chief's untimely end,
The generous lord, the trusty friend!
The cup of bliss he loved to drain,
And wealth upon his friends to rain.
Our sure defence when fear arose,
A bitter scourge to stubborn foes.
In Holy Scripture deeply read,
The sacred flame he duly fed;
Of ready hand, of fearless heart,
In sternest penance bore his part.
O, let the foe thy hand has slain
The honours of the dead obtain.'
Then Rama answered: 'Hatred dies
When low in dust the foeman lies.
Now triumph bids our contest cease,
And knits us in the bonds of peace.
Let funeral rites be duly paid,
And be it mine thy toil to aid.'

SITA DISGRACED.

With her sweet eyelids wet with tears of shame,
Unveiled before so many, Sita came
And met her long-lost husband face to face.
And Rama gazed upon her winning grace
With eyes that longed to weep, but, mute and still,
He stayed their fountains with his iron will.
No word was spoken, for a double tide
Surged in his changing bosom, love and pride.
No word for her who stood before her king
In shame and anguish like a guilty thing.
No word of greeting for his rescued dame
On whose bright soul ne'er lay a shade of blame:
Whom giant hands from her dear home had torn,
And kept a hopeless captive, sorrow-worn;

For Rama's sake still living through her pain
And now returning as from Death's domain.

Once, only once, she lifted up her eye,
Once called upon him with a bitter cry.
Then from rude eyes the tears began to flow,
And warriors melted at the lady's woe.
Scarce Lakshman's self the rising flood represt,
And hid his face a moment in his vest.
But Sita cast her causeless shame away,
And her own virtue was her strength and stay.
Conscious of truth that slandering tongues defied,
Her sobs she checked, her weeping eyes she dried;
And struggling still with anger and surprise
Looked on her husband with unflinching eyes.
Then Rama spoke: 'O dame, my task is done:
The foe is slain and thou, the spoil, art won.
Mine arm has conquered and, mine honour freed,
Has killed the robber and avenged the deed.
Lord of myself, loosed from the vows I swore,
Duty and honour claim from me no more.

The wondrous bridge that spanned the angry flood,
The Giants' city red with foemen's blood:
The countless host by friendly warriors led,
The wise who counselled and the brave who bled:
With hearts that sank not in the doubtful fray—
This glorious toil has gained its crown to-day.
But hearken, lady. 'Twas no love for thee
That led my army o'er the angry sea.
'Twas not for thee that streams of blood were shed,
And Lanka's streets piled high with giant dead.
No fond affection for my captive wife
Impelled my arrow in the day of strife.
I battled only to avenge the cause
Of injured honour and insulted laws.
Thy name is blemisht, and the shameful doubt
Fills all my heart and drives affection out.
No more thy beauty charms me. 'Tis a light
Shed by a torch that pains the injured sight.
Go where thou wilt. I give thee leave to roam:
I lead no traitress to my royal home.'

Then Sita spoke in accents soft and low,

Yet struggling with unutterable woe:
'Hast thou the heart O monarch, to dismiss
A highborn lady with a speech like this?
To banish thus the daughter of a king,
Like some light damsel trained to dance and sing?
By all the merit of my life I swear
I am not what thy hasty words declare.
Doubt others' faith, but cast all doubt aside
Of one whose truth a life of love has tried.
Round my weak form his arms the Giant threw,
But all the blame to Fate and him is due.
What could I do—a woman and alone?
My heart was mine, and that was still thine own.
'Gainst thee and honour have I wrought no sin:
Pure is my body as my soul within,
Or may the Gods my name and fame destroy,
And bar my spirit from eternal joy.
Dear Lakshman, haste, prepare the burning pile;
I cannot live to bear a load so vile.
There is no way but only this to gain
Freedom and rest and clear my life of stain.'

HOME.

The rest is thus briefly told in the Argument of the poem with which the First Book begins:

Then Sita, touched with noble ire,
Gave her fair body to the fire.
But straight the God of Wind appeared,
And words from heaven her honour cleared.
And Rama clasped his faithful dame
Uninjured, pure from spot and blame,
Obedient to the Lord of Fire
And the high mandate of his sire.
Led by the Lord who rules the sky,
The Gods and heavenly Saints drew nigh,
And honoured him with worthy meed,
Rejoicing in each glorious deed.

His task achieved, his foe removed,
He triumphed, by the Gods approved.
By grace of Heaven he raised to life
The chieftains slain in mortal strife ;
Then in the magic chariot through
The clouds to Nandigrama flew.
Met by his faithful brothers there
He loosed his votive coil of hair ;
Thence fair Ayodhya's town he gained,
And o'er his father's kingdom reigned.
Disease or famine ne'er opprest
His happy people, richly blest
With all the joys of ample wealth,
Of sweet content, and perfect health.
No widow mourned her well-loved mate,
No sire his son's untimely fate.
They feared not storm or robber's hand :
No fire or flood laid waste the land :
The Golden Age seemed come again
To bless the days of Rama's reign.

THE MESSENGER CLOUD.

"The subject of the poem is simple and ingenious: a Yaksha, a divinity of an inferior order, an attendant upon the god of riches, Kuvera, and one of a class which, as it appears from the poem, is characterized by a benevolent spirit, a gentle temper, and an affectionate disposition, has incurred the displeasure of his sovereign, and has been condemned by him to a twelve-months' exile from his home. In the solitary but sacred forest in which he spends the period of his banishment, the Yaksha's most urgent care is to find an opportunity of conveying intelligence and consolation to his wife; and, in the wildness of his grief, he fancies that he discovers a friendly messenger in a cloud—one of those noble masses which seem almost instinct with life, as they traverse a tropical sky in the commencement of the Monsoon, and move with slow and solemn progression from the equatorial ocean to the snows of the Himalaya. In the spirit of this bold but not unnatural personification, the Yaksha addresses the Cloud, and entrusts to it the message he yearns to despatch to the absent object of his attachment. He describes the direction in which the Cloud is to travel—one marked out for it indeed, by the eternal laws of nature; and takes this opportunity of alluding to the most important scenes of Hindu mythology and tradition;—not with the dulness of prosaïc detail, but with that true poetic pencil which, by a few happy touches, brings the subject of the description vividly before the mind's eye. Arrived at the end of the journey, the condition of his beloved wife is the theme of the exile's anticipations, and is dwelt upon with equal delicacy and truth; and the poem terminates with the message that is intended to assuage her grief and animate her hopes. The whole of this part of the composition is distinguished by the graceful expression of natural and amiable feelings, and cannot fail to leave a favourable impression of the national character." H. H. Wilson.

I.

Dark are the shadows of the trees that wave
Their pendent branches upon Rama's Hill,[1]
Veiling the stream where Sita loved to lave
Sweet limbs that hallowed as they touched the rill:
There a sad Spirit, whom his master's will,
Wroth for a service he had rendered ill,
An exile from his happy home had torn,
Was sternly doomed for twelve long months to mourn,
Of all his glories reft, of his dear love forlorn.

II.

Some weary days, intolerably slow,
The listless exile all alone had past:
The bracelet clung not to the arm that woe
Had withered, and the weeping and the fast;
When on a day of June he upward cast
His aching eyes, lo! on the mountain lay
A glorious cloud embracing it, as vast
As some huge elephant that stoops in play
To trample down the bank that bars his onward way.

[1] Situated, it appears, a little to the north of Nagpore.

III.

Once and again his wistful eyes he raised,
Checking the tear-drop in her secret springs.
And on the jasmine's sweet restorer gazed
The mournful servant of the King of Kings :[1]
Mournful, for if the first seen rain-cloud brings
Trouble and doubt to him whose arms are prest
Around his love, O, judge what torture wrings
His bosom far from her he loves the best,
A prey to longing love and fear and wild unrest.

IV.

Then cheered by hope he culled each budding spray,
And the last blooms that lingered in the brake,
And hastened humbly to the Cloud to pray
With offerings, trusting for his darling's sake,
While, Welcome, friendship's sweetest word he spake,
That he would waft his message, as a spell
Whence life and comfort the lone bride might take:
That he would calm her troubled heart and tell
That were she only present all with him were well.

[1] A title of Kuvera, the God of Wealth.

V.

Blame not the Spirit, if his wild despair
Urged his love-laden bosom to complain
To the dark child of vapour, sun, and air:
Have ye ne'er learnt that hopeless love is fain
To shriek the lamentation wrung by pain
In nature's senseless ear: to weep and moan
To valley and to mountain, and to rain
Tears on the flowers and call on stock and stone
To suffer with his woe and echo groan for groan?

VI.

'O thou of ever-changing form,' he cried,
'I know thee, offspring of a glorious race,
The mighty counsellor: close by the side
Of royal Indra is thine honoured place.
By cruel fate torn from my love's embrace
I fly to thee for comfort in my woe:
Better to sue and be denied the grace
By one of gentle blood whose worth we knew,
Than stoop to bear away rich guerdon from the low.

VII.

Dear friend of all whom flames of anguish burn,
If thou hast power and pity, as of old,
On me, on me thy tender glances turn,
Who mourn the anger of the God of Gold.
To distant Alaka fly uncontrolled,
Where dwell my brethren in their stately halls;
There let my message to my love be told
'Mid gilded palaces and marble walls
On which the silver light of Siva's crescent[1] falls.

VIII.

There wilt thou see the melancholy bride
Of me, thy brother, thin and ghastly pale;
Her only care—for every joy has died—
To count the dark days' slowly lengthening tale.
She lingers yet; for woman's heart, though frail
As the fair flower that, nipt by winter's chill,
Bends her sweet head before the rude rough gale,
If hope be left her in her misery, still
Clings fondly to the life despair alone can kill.

[1] The crest of Siva is the new moon, and the Himalaya mountains, amid which Alaka is situated, are his favourite haunts.

IX.

Hence as thou mountest up, each lonely wife,
Tossing her tresses from her brow in glee
And drinking from the sight rapture and life,
Thy rapid course through realms of air shall see,
And whisper blessings as she looks on thee.
For who at such a warning would not brave
Danger and death, and to his darling flee,
Save the sad captive in his fetters, save
A prisoned wretch like me, a tyrant's helpless slave!

X.

As favouring gales thy airy course impel,
The tuneful Rain-birds shall thy way attend;
A pomp of wreathing cranes thy state shall swell,
On silver pinions rustling round their friend;
From many a stream shall lordly swans ascend,
When the glad thunder of thy voice they hear,
And wild with joy their eager course shall bend
To Manas' mountain lake, still following near
Till high Kailasa's peaks, thy journey's end, appear.

XI.

Now with one brief adieu, one last embrace,
Turn from this steep, thine ancient friend, away,
Where Rama's blessed feet once left their trace,
Though his hot tears will mourn thy shortened stay:
Yet, ere the message of my love I say,
Hear the long journey, mark each place of rest
Where thou wilt fain with weary wings delay
To gather strength upon some mountain crest,
Or drink exhausted from some gentle river's breast.

XII.

Quick, from this mountain moist with verdure, rise
And turn thee northward: in thy lofty flight
The nymphs of air with eager upturned eyes
Shall look on thee in wonder and delight,
And deem some hill rent from the mountain height
Rides on the furious blast. Then, sad with shame,
The warder elephants, whose peerless might
Upholds the world, shall mourn their vanisht fame,
And, far surpast by thee, renounce their ancient claim.

XIII.

Then steering east, yon glorious gems that blend
Their light and shade in Indra's heavenly bow[1]
To thy dark ground a softened light shall lend,
And make thee glorious with a borrowed glow;
As the gay splendours of the peacock throw
New beauty, round the youthful Krishna spread.
Then to the plains of fruitful Mala go
Whose bright-eyed maids, with fond looks upward sped,
Shall bless their bounteous friend slow sailing overhead.

XIV.

Thence northward speeding, with a lighter course,
Turn to the west, and, floating downward, seek,
A pleasant shelter to recruit thy force,
The shady summits of the Mango Peak.
He will relieve thee travel-worn and weak;
Thy timely aid that oft has quencht the flame
That burnt his trees will in thy favour speak.
Friendship's sweet debt not e'en the base disclaim,

[1] The rainbow.

And far from noble souls be such disgrace and shame.[1]

XV.

When thy dark glory rests above the gold
Of fruit, and green of boughs that wave around,
The maids of Heaven with rapture shall behold
New beauty stealing o'er the summit, crowned.
As with the tresses of a woman bound
Upon her fair head as a diadem.
And the bright mountain, swelling from the ground,
Like the full breast of Earth, shall ravish them,
When thou, dark Cloud, art there, that bosom's bud and gem.

XVI.

If worn and weary with thy lengthening way,

[1] "The Hindus have been the object of much idle panegyric, and equally idle detraction. Some writers have invested them with every amiable attribute, and they have been deprived by others of the common virtues of humanity. Amongst the excellences denied to them, gratitude has been always particularized; and there are many of the European residents in India who scarcely imagine that the natives of the country ever heard of such a sentiment. To them, and to all detractors on this head, the above verse is a satisfactory reply; and that no doubt of its tenor may remain, I add the literal translation of the original passage. "Even a low man, when his friend comes to him for assistance, will not turn away his face, in consideration of former kindness;—how, therefore, should the exalted act thus?" H. H. WILSON.

The famous hill of Chitrakuta[1] woos
Thy friendly presence for awhile to stay;
There, as the grateful rest thy strength renews,
Do not, for pity, gentle Cloud, refuse
To soothe his burning heat with thy soft rain.
Sweet mercy, watered with the kindly dews
Of virtue, is a seed ne'er sown in vain:
Soon will the generous act its worthy fruit obtain.

XVII.

Linger an hour, then, launching lightly forth,
Leave the dark glades which Wood-nymphs wander o'er;
Pursue thine airy journey to the north
With pinions swifter for thy minisht store.
Soon over Vindhya's mountains wilt thou soar,
And Reva's rippling stream whose waters glide
Beneath their feet, without their rush and roar,
In many a rock-barred channel, summer-dried,
Like lines of paint that deck an elephant's huge side.

[1] "The mountain here mentioned must be in the vicinity of Omerkuntuk, and part of the same range: the name signifies, "the variegated or wonderful peak," and is applied to a number of hills: the most famous hill of this name is situated in Bundelkund." H. H. Wilson.

XVIII.

Here, where the air is heavy with the scent
Of elephants that roam along the rill,
From the fair stream restore thy treasures spent
In travel, and thy wasted bosom fill,
Lest the rude wind drive thee about at will.
To cheer thy way each bud shall lovelier grow,
And fragrant jasmine be more fragrant still,
The burning woods waft odours from below,
And clear-toned birds delight thy onward path to show.

XIX.

Each Sylph shall watch thee with observant eyes,
And mark the Rain-birds eager for the rain
Flocking to meet thee from the distant skies.
Then he will count, in ever lengthening chain,
Mounting from fen and field, crane after crane,
And, when thy voice of thunder, loud and clear,
Proclaims thee nigh, to his fond breast will strain
His darling, mingling with each kiss a tear
Drawn from his happy eyes by love's unreasoning fear.

XX.

Ah me! in vain, 'mid lovely scenes like those,
I bid my friendly messenger be fleet;
Will not each mountain woo thee to repose
Where wild woods murmur and the flowers are sweet?
Will not the peacock, as he turns to greet
Thy coming with love-beaming eye, prevail?
Will not his tender looks my hopes defeat?
With too successful blandishment assail
Thy yielding heart, and cause thy promised truth to fail?

XXI.

On, on, my herald! as thou sailest nigh,
A green of richer glory will invest
Dasarna's groves where the pale leaf is dry.
There shall the swans awhile their pinions rest.
Then the Rose-apple, in full beauty drest,
Shall show her fruit; then shall the crane prepare,
Warned of the coming rain, to build her nest,
And many a tender spray shall rudely tear
From the old village tree, the peasants' sacred care.

XXII.

But rest not yet; thy steady course pursue,
And a town foremost on the rolls of fame,
Vidisa,[1] seat of kings, will charm thy view,
And bless thee far above thy fondest aim;
Where Vetravati, like an amorous dame
With arching brows, her rippling waves will show,
And with each winning art thy love will claim,
Enslaving thee with the melodious flow
Of streams that kiss the bank, murmuring soft and low.

XXIII.

Thence to a lowlier hill direct thy flight,
And for a moment on its crest descend;
Thy touch its faint Kadambas shall delight,
And through each spray new life and rapture send
That bud and blossom shall with joy distend.
These are the groves where youthful lovers meet
Their gold-bought beauties, whose rich perfumes blend
With the wild flowers till every dark retreat
Is loaded with the scent that fills the rocky seat.

[1] Vidisa appears to be the modern Bhilsa in the province of Malwa.

XXIV.

Rise with new vigour in thy wings, and look
Upon the fainting jasmine-buds that pine
Along the parcht bank of the mountain brook:
To their mute prayer in pitying love incline,
And water them with those sweet drops of thine,
Shading awhile the heat-drop-beaded face
Of the young flower-girl as she hastes to twine
Her fragrant wreath, too languid to replace
The drooping lotus-bud she culled her ear to grace.

XXV.

Here bend a little from thy straight career,
And though thou speedest on to northern skies,
Turn and behold a wondrous sight, for near
Thy path Oujein's[1] imperial domes arise.
Shouldst thou not see her women's glorious eyes,
That flash to love or kindle to disdain
In fire that with the lightning's splendour vies—

[1] "Ujjayani, or the modern Oujein, is supposed to have been the residence of our poet, and the capital of his celebrated patron, Vikramaditya. It has been a place of great note, from the earliest periods of Hindu tradition down to the present day." H. H. Wilson.

Those looks that bind the heart as with a chain—
Thy birth has been for naught, thy life is all in vain.

XXVI.

Now from the level of thine airy road
Glide gently down, and amorously sink
Upon Nirvindhya's breast who long has glowed
With love of thee: there cling, and kiss, and drink.
She, with the wild swans clamorous on her brink,
And their white wings around her for a zone,
From thy soft pressure will not coyly shrink.
Her trembling wavelets will her rapture own,
And testify her love by every gesture shown.

XXVII.

Sail on, refresht, dear envoy, nor forget
To look with pity upon Sindu, pale
With sere leaves shaken o'er the rivulet
From her own trees by the hot summer gale.
For her sad shrunken waters welnigh fail,
Thin as the length of hair which women braid
When their dear husbands' absence they bewail.

O, pity her, thou gentle Cloud, and aid
The longing of her love by each fond look betrayed.

XXVIII.

Near thee a bright imperial city stands,
The blest Avanti or Visala,[1] pride
Of all the earth; famed for its minstrel band
Who with the magic of their verse have vied
To spread the tender story far and wide
Of King Udayana:[2] a glorious town,
Brought, by the happy Saints unsatisfied
With all that Paradise can offer, down,

[1] Synonyms of Oujein.

[2] "Pradyota was a sovereign of Oujein, who had a daughter named Vasavadatta whom he intended to bestow in marriage upon a King of the name of Sanjaya. In the meantime the princess sees the figure of Vatsaraja (or Udayana) in a dream, and becomes enamoured of him. She contrives to inform him of her love, and he carries her off from her father and his rival." WILSON.

Vasavadatta has been edited and elegantly epitomized in English by DR. FITZEDWARD HALL.

To be their best reward, their virtue's worthiest crown[1].

XXIX.

The sweet soft zephyr, laden with the scent
Which every lotus opening to the air
Of morning from its rifled stores has lent,
Plays wooingly around the loosened hair
And fevered cheek of every lady there;
Then as it blows o'er Sipra,[2] fresh and strong,
Bids all the swans upon her banks prepare
To hail the sunrise with their sweetest song,
And loves with its own voice the music to prolong.

[1] "Besides ultimate felicity, the Hindus have several minor degrees of happiness; amongst which is the enjoyment of Indra's Swarga, or, in fact, of a Muhammadan paradise. The degree and duration of the pleasures of this paradise are proportioned to the merits of those admitted to it; and "they, who have enjoyed this lofty region of Swarga, but whose virtue is exhausted, revisit the habitation of mortals." The case now alluded to seems, however, to be something different from that so described by Sir William Jones. It appears, by the explanation of the Commentators, that the exhausted pleasures of Swarga had proved insufficient for the recompense of certain acts of austerity, which, however, were not such as to merit final emancipation: the divine persons had therefore to seek elsewhere for the balance of their reward; and for that purpose they returned to Earth bringing with them the fairest portion of Swarga, in which they continued to live in the discharge of pious duties till the whole account was settled, and their liberated spirits were re-united with the great, uniform, and primeval essence. The portion of Swarga thus brought to Earth was the city Avanti; whose superior sanctity and divine privileges are here alluded to, and thus explained by the poet." H. H. WILSON.

[2] The river on which Oujein stands.

XXX.

Rest on these flower-sweet terraces, and feel,
From open casements where the women braid
Their long, soft locks, delicious odour steal.
Look on the polisht marble where the maid
Her small foot, blushing with the dye, has laid;
There will the peacock with a joyous dance
Spring forth to greet thee from the Mango's shade,
And hail his dear friend with a loving glance:
O, rest in this sweet spot, nor lose this blessed chance.

XXXI.

Hence to the temple of the mighty Lord
Whom Chandi[1] loves and all the worlds revere;
There for a moment shalt thou be adored
By those who serve him, when thy hues appear
Like Siva's neck,[2] as though their God were near.
Then through the garden pleasant gales shall stray
From Gandhavati's fountain, crystal-clear,

[1] A name of the consort of Siva.

[2] "But Siva those destroying streams
Drank up at Brahma's beck:
Still in thy throat the dark flood gleams,
God of the Azure Neck."

Bearing the scent of lotus-blooms away
Shaken by lovely girls who in the water play.

XXXII.

Stay till the hour of evening worship comes;
Stay while the Day-God lingers in the sky;
Then with low thunderings, for the call of drums,
Win precious guerdon from the Lord Most High.
Each dancing-girl, with rapture-beaming eye,
Shall thank thee as thy soft drops cool the ground,
While her faint hands the jewelled chowries[1] ply,
And, as she moves her languid feet, around
Her slender waist the chimes of tinkling silver sound.

XXXIII.

When the thick shadows of dark midnight fall
Blinding the maidens in the royal street,
Who fain would fly where love and rapture call,
O, let thy flashes guide their erring feet
And lead them safely till their loves they meet.

[1] A brush made of peacock's feathers, or the tail of the yak. It is used as a fan, or to whisk off flies and other insects; and this piece of attention is paid by Hiudus to the figures of their Gods.

But check thy rain and still thy thunder, lest
Their terrors force the maidens to retreat.
Then with thy lightning bride, play-wearied, rest
Where sleeps, high up the tower, the white dove in her nest.

XXXIV.

Thence, with the rising sun, thy course pursue,
For loving envoys ever shun delay;
But hide him not, when mounting, from the view,
For the false lover comes with coming day
To the poor weeping girl, to kiss away
The water from her eyes. So comes the sun
To cheer the lilies with his amorous ray,
And kiss their drooping heads, till, one by one,
They dry the dewy drops that down their petals run.

XXXV.

Then will thy shadow for a moment sleep
On the white bosom of Gambhira's stream,[1]

[1] "This river, and the Gandhavati in the vicinity of the temple of **Siva**, which lately occurred, are probably amongst the numerous and (now) nameless brooks with which the province of Malwa abounds." H. H. Wilson.

And thy dear image in her crystal deep
Blend with the fancies of her maiden dream.
Then will she wake to win thee with the gleam
Of finny darters for the lore of eyes.
Steel not thy heart against her love, nor deem
Her lilies smile but to allure the prize:
O, yield thee to her prayer, O, yield thee and be wise.

XXXVI.

Ah, yes! I see thee in her loving arms—
Those feathery branches of the tall bamboo—
And spread beneath thee are her yielded charms,
And her smooth sides uncovered to the view.
How could such loveliness unheeded woo?
Who could resist her softly pleading smile,
With heart all cold and dead, if e'er he knew
What joy it is to kiss each breast-like isle?
Who, who would turn away, nor linger there awhile?

XXXVII.

Charged with the odours of the wakened earth
Whom thy fresh rain has left so pure and gay,

The wind of early morning, wild with mirth,
Amid the branches of the grove shall stray
And woo each tendril to responsive play:
Then waft thee on to Devagiri's height,
Charming the ear with music on the way,
Where languid elephants shall stay his flight
And drink his balmy breath with wonder and delight.

XXXVIII.

There gleams the temple, loved and honoured most
By Skanda, Lord of War; who, at the head
Of the bright legions of the heavenly host,
Embattled Gods to arms and conquest led:
A wondrous Child, in flames of glory bred.
O, crown the slayer of his demon foes!
Turn to a cloud of living flowers, and shed
O'er his young brows the lily and the rose
Bathed in the lucid stream through heavenly realms that flows.

XXXIX.

Send forth thy thunder, till the glorious voice,
By rocky dell and cavern multiplied,
Bidding the peacock in the shade rejoice,

Calls him to dance along the mountain's side:
Majestic bird, whom Skanda loves to ride,[1]
Whom Skanda's mother holds so wondrous dear
That when his moulted plumes, in all their pride
Of starry radiance, fall and glitter near,
She lifts them from the ground to grace her royal ear.]

XL.

Thy homage rendered to the Warrior-God
Whose infant steps amid the thickets strayed
Where the reeds wave over the holy sod,
Speed on, but let thy course awhile be staid
Till meet obeisance to that stream be made
That sprang in olden time from sacred gore
Of hecatombs by Rantideva paid,[2]

[1] Skanda, or Kartikeya, the War-God, born to destroy the demon Taraka, is represented mounted on a peacock.

[2] "Sprung from the blood of countless oxen shed." The sacrifice of the horse or of the cow appears to have been common in the earliest periods of the Hindu ritual. It has been conceived that the sacrifice was not real, but typical; and that the form of sacrificing only was performed upon the victim, after which it was set at liberty. The text of this passage, however, is unfavourable to such a notion, as the metamorphosis of the blood of the kine into a river certainly implies that blood was diffused. The expression of the original, literally rendered, is, "sprung from the blood of the daughters of Surabhi," that is, 'kine'; Surabhi being a celebrated cow produced at the churning of the ocean, and famed for granting to her votaries whatever they desired. "Daughter of Surabhi" is an expression of common occurrence to denote the cow." H. H. WILSON.

And through the lands her author's glory bore
Enshrined within her waves, to spread for evermore.

XLI.

In fear, each minstrel of the heavenly quire
Shall see thee stoop those watery stores to drain,
And fly thee trembling lest his darling lyre
Be robbed of music by thy threatened rain.
Then from his airy watch-tower will he strain
His eager eyes the wondrous sight to view,
As thy large lucid drops, in many a chain,
Hang their long pendants o'er thy borrowed blue,
A string of pearls that show the sapphire gleaming through.

XLII.

That river past, to Dasapura fly,
And with the shadow of thy coming rouse
The beauties of the city till each eye
Glances its welcome: till each maid and spouse,
Beneath the delicate bending of her brows,
Shows her dark pupil flashing wild with glee
In her pure pearly eye-ball, and allows

Short glimpses of a sight as fair to see
As a white jasmine-bud where sits the black wild-bee.

XLIII.

Then, speeding on to Brahmavartta's land,
Hover above the Kurus' fatal field[1]
Rich with the blood of many a slaughtered band;
Where the proud banner waved, the war-cry pealed,
Where the sword smote upon the helm and shield;
When godlike Arjuna,[2] with arrowy hail,
Laid low the heads of kings who scorned to yield;
As when the arrows of thy sleet assail
The golden lilies' heads and strew them down the vale.

[1] "Kuru-Kshetra the Field of the Kurus, is the scene of the celebrated battle between them and the Pandus, which forms the subject of the Mahabharata. It lies a little to the south-east of Thanesar, and is still a place of note and pilgrimage. It is not far from Paniput, the seat of another celebrated engagement, that between the assembled Princes of Hindustan, and the combined strength of the Marhattas. This part of the country, indeed, presenting few obstacles to the movement of large armies, has in every period of the history of Hindustan been the theatre of contention." H. H. WILSON.

[2] "Arjun was the friend and pupil of Krishna, and the third of the Pandava Princes. He has been long ago introduced to European readers, especially in Sir Charles Wilkins's able translation of the Bhagavad Gita; and appears, in the opening of that poem, in a very amiable light." H. H. WILSON.

XLIV.

Now to Saraswati,[1] whose waters roll
Beside thy path, with due respect draw near,
And let her cleansing wave refresh thy soul.
When Balarama,[2] filled with noble fear
Of kindred slaughter, could no longer cheer
His sorrowing spirit with the sparkling wine,
Though, mirrored in the cup, the eyes most dear
Of his own Revati were wont to shine,
He sought this limpid flood and made the spot divine.

XLV.

On to the place where infant Ganga leaps
From the dark woods that belt the Mountains' King,
Hurling her torrent down the rugged steeps:

[1] "The Saraswati, or as it is corruptly called, the Sursooty, falls from the southern portion of the Himalaya mountains, and runs into the great desert, where it is lost in its sands. It flows a little to the north-west of Kuru-kshetra, and though rather out of the line of the cloud's progress not sufficiently so to prevent the introduction into the poem of a stream so celebrated and so holy." H. H. Wilson.

[2] "We have here the reason why the waters of the Saraswati are objects of religious veneration. Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna, refused to take any part in the warfare between the Kurus and the Pandus, and retired into voluntary seclusion filled with grief at the nature of the contest." H. H. Wilson.

Those holy waters, as the sages sing,
To Sagar's children bliss and heaven could bring.[1]
Fresh from her native sky, a sportive maid,
On Siva's awful head she dared to cling;
And with the laughter of her foam repaid
His consort's jealous frown as with his hair she played.[2]

[1] "The Ganges, according to the legend, was brought from heaven, by the religious rities of Bhagiratha, the great-grandson of Sagar; who, as well as that king, had engaged in a long series of acts of austerity, for the purpose of procuring the descent of the river to wash the ashes of Sagar's 60,000 sons. The youths had been reduced to this state by the indignation of Kapila, a saint, whose devotions they had disturbed in their eager quest of the horse that was to be the victim of an Aswamedha by their father. Their misfortunes did not, however, cease with their existence; as their admission to Swarga depended, according to the instructions of Garuda, upon the use of the water of the Ganges in the administration of their funeral rites. At this period the Ganges watered the plains of heaven alone; and it was no easy undertaking to induce her to resign those for an humble and earthly course. Sagar, his son Ansuman, and grandson Dilipa, died without being able to effect the descent of the heavenly stream: but his great-grandson, Bhagiratha, was more fortunate; and his long-continued austerities were rewarded by the fall of the Ganges, the bathing of the ashes of his ancestors with the holy water, and the establishment of them in the enjoyment of Swarga." H. H. WILSON.

[2] "The earth being unable to bear the sudden descent of so great a river as the Ganges, Siva was induced, at the intercession of Bhagiratha, to interpose his sacred head. Accordingly, Ganga first alighted on the head of the deity, and remained for a considerable period, wandering amongst the tresses of his long and entangled hair, to the extreme jealousy and displeasure, according to Kalidas, of the goddess Gauri or Parvati, Siva's consort." H. H. WILSON.

"The Descent of the Ganges" has been magnificently translated, from the Ramayan, by the late Dean of St. Paul's. A version of the legend is given in this volume.

XLVI.

Drink, for the flood is living crystal; drink,
For the warm gale thy weary wings has dried;
Come, gently bend thee o'er her rocky brink
And tint her waves with azure as they glide:
So when dark Jumna's tributary tide
With kissing waves to blend with Ganga flows,
The mightier waters beautifully dyed
With borrowed azure to the sun disclose,
Mixt with their pearly light, the sapphire's darker glows.

XLVII.

See! the proud parent of this heavenly child
Woos thee to rest upon his breezy height,
Where herds of musk-deer, as they wander wild,
Enrich with odour every crag. Alight,
And, coucht upon the summit robed in white,
Enhance his snowy beauty, as one speck
Of sable shows more gloriously bright
The skin of Siva's Bull,[1] and serves to deck
The whiteness of his flank, the splendour of his neck.

[1] The animal on which Siva loves to ride, always represented of a milk-white colour.

XLVIII.

Hark ! the gales whistling through the woods of pine,
Urging to madness all the straining boughs
That twist and chafe and bend and intertwine,
The latent flame to wildest fury rouse,
Singeing the long hair of the mountain cows.
Quick ! rain a thousand torrents on the crest
Of the kind hill and cool his burning brows :
With wealth of water thou art richly blest,
And fortune's sweetest fruit is aiding friends distrest.

XLIX.

Should Gryphon hosts, by mad presumption led,
Vext by thy thunder, mount the realm of air
To ride thee down beneath their impious tread,
Laugh with thy rain to see them baffled there,
And with the dashing of thy hail-stones scare
Thy scattered foes. So let them learn how vain
Is the wild enterprise they fain would dare ;
That the fond strivings of ambition gain
No guerdon but disgrace, no recompense but pain.

L.

But stoop a little from thy pride of place:
With circling motion reverently slow
Around the rock where pilgrims still may trace
The foot of Mahadeva,[1] softly go:
There saintly breasts with rapt devotion glow;
There holy hands the flames of worship feed;
There His good servants, saved from sin and woe,
From the sore weight of earthly life are freed,
Join His own heavenly band and gain a priceless meed.

LI.

Hast thou no voice to laud Him? Be not dumb;
But let thy thunder round the caverned hill
Proclaim His glory like a mightier drum.
The gales with melody each reed shall fill:
The maidens of the sky, whose bosoms thrill
With holy rapture, shall rejoice and sing;
And all shall swell the glorious concert till
Valley and mountain, earth and air shall ring
Hailing with jubilant hymns the great victorious King.

[1] The 'Great God,' Siva.

LII.

Skirting the mansion of eternal snows

Compress thy form, and winding round explore

Where Krauñcha's parted rocks a pass disclose

Traversed by swans—those rocks that burst before

The might of Rama[1] and the axe he bore.

Then show like Vishnu's darksome foot, whose tread

Measured the sky and earth's broad bosom o'er,

When Bali with his proud heart filled with dread

Confessed the Saviour God and bowed his impious head.[2]

[1] The Krauncha pass is said to have been made by Parasurama, or Rama with the axe, an incarnation of Vishnu.

[2] "The story of Bali and the Vamana, or dwarf Avatar, was first told by Sonnerat, and has since been frequently repeated. As the former is a good specimen of the style in which Hindu legends were narrated by European travellers in the last century, it may be here inserted. "The fifth incarnation was in a Bramin dwarf, under the name of Vamen: it was wrought to restrain the pride of the giant Bely. The latter, after having conquered the gods, expelled them from Sorgon: he was generous, true to his word, compassionate, and charitable. Vichenou, under the form of a very little Bramin, presented himself before him while he was sacrificing, and asked him for three paces of land to build a hut. Bely ridiculed the apparent imbecility of the dwarf, in telling him that he ought not to limit his demand to a bequest so trifling;—that his generosity could bestow a much larger donation of land. Vamen answered, that being of so small a stature, what he asked was more than sufficient. The prince immediately granted his request; and, to ratify his donation, poured water into his right hand; which was no sooner done, than the dwarf grew so prodigiously, that his body filled the universe! He measured the earth with one pace, and the heavens with another; and then summoned Bely to give him his word for the third. The prince then recognised Vichenou, adored him, and presented his head to him: but the god, satisfied with his submission, sent him to govern the Pandalon; and permitted him to return every year to the earth, the day of the full-moon, in the month of November." H. H. Wilson.

LIII.

Now soaring upward, on Kailas's crest,
That lends its mirror to each heavenly maid,
Linger a little as an honoured guest,
And let thine airy pilgrimage be staid.
Once that high mountain shook and was afraid,
Loosened by Ravan, Lord of Lanka's isle;
Now cleaving heaven, to all the lands displayed,
The white peaks of the lily-radiant pile
Flash on the world below, like Siva's glorious smile.

LIV.

I see the summits of the hill, that shine
Like new-cut ivory so purely white,
Gleam with fresh lustre as that form of thine
Descends upon them, and thy tint of night
Tips with a sable pall the snowy height.
So Balarama's limbs of silvery hue
Show fairer in their purple livery dight;
So from his chest and arms exposed to view
The heightened sheen beneath sets off the raiment too.[1]

[1] He is represented of a white colour, clothed in a dark-blue vest.

LV.

High fate is thine should sportive Gauri [1] list
In those sweet moments ere the close of day—
Untied the serpent-bracelet from the wrist—
Hand lockt in hand, with Siva there to stray.
Come, aid with easy steps their upward way:
Thy stores of rain within thy breast confine,
And let the heavenly pair delighted lay
The blessing of their feet on stairs that shine
With gold caught from the sun, ruby and almandine.

LVI.

Then will celestial maids with laugh and shout
Open their lovely arms thy form to seize,
And o'er their tresses force thy waters out
Which the light touch of kindred diamond [2] frees.
But should too long restraint thy soul displease,
Send forth the thunder of thy voice, and they,

[1] One of the names of Siva's consort.

[2] "The diamond and thunderbolt, according to Hindu ideas, are of one substance, and are called by the same name. As the fall of the thunderbolt is usually followed by rain, and may thus be considered as its cause, the propinquity and the mutual friction of the same substance upon the wrists of our young ladies is, in like manner, supposed to occasion the dispersion of the fluid treasures of the Cloud." H. H. Wilson.

Fleeter through terror than the western breeze,
Will fly thee, e'en in their delicious play,
And seek their distant home in wonder and dismay.

LVII.

Near is the goal, yet, ere thy course be run,
One sweet fresh draught of limpid water take
Where golden lilies opening to the sun
Stud the broad bosom of the Manas lake.[1]
Deign for awhile a friendly shade to make
For Indra's elephant, and, floating through,
With the soft fanning of thy pinions shake
The Heavenly Tree, and all her blooms renew
With the young morning's breath embalmed with silver dew.

LVIII.

There, by the mountain claspt in loving arms,
Alaka, City of the Blessed, lies.
Her bright feet bathed by Ganga's flood, she charms
With marvellous beauty e'en immortal eyes.

[1] A celebrated lake in the centre of the Himalayas. "We here take leave of the geographical part of the poem, which is highly creditable to Kalidasa's accuracy, and now come to the region of unmixed fable, the residence of Kuvera and his demigods." H. H. WILSON.

Thou too, free rover, shalt her beauty prize,
And often wander to mine own dear town.
Nor shall sweet Alaka thy love despise,
But proudly wear upon her domes a crown
Of the pure drops of pearl thou pourest softly down.

LIX.

And she has charms which naught but thine excels:
High as thyself her airy turrets soar,
And from her gilded palaces there swells
The voice of drums, loud as thy thunder's roar:
Thy pearls are mockt by many a jewelled floor.
Come, with the glories of thy bow compare
The varied tints on arch and corridor:
And, for thy lightning in the midnight air,
Look in her maidens' eyes and own a rival there.

LX.

Unmatcht is she for lovely girls who learn
To choose the flowers that suit them best, and bring
The varied treasures of each month in turn
To aid those charms which need no heightening:

The Amaranth, bright glory of the spring;
The Lotus, gathered from the summer flood;
Acacias, taught around their brows to cling;
The Jasmine's fragrant white, their locks to stud;
And, bursting at thy rain, the young Kadamba-bud.

LXI.

O beauties, worthy of that beauteous place,
That sweetest city which I know so well,
Where mine own brethren of etherial race,
Blest with the love of those fair angels, dwell
In homes too beautiful for tongue to tell!
Those homes by night a starry radiance fills,
Shot from the jewelled floors where breathes the smell
Of roses, and while melting music thrills,
They quaff the precious wine the Heavenly Tree distils.

LXII.

The tell-tale sunbeam of the morning, thrown
Upon the path each roving beauty chose,
Falls on some faded flower, some loosened zone,
A withered lotus or a dying rose,

Or bracelet which her haste forgot to close ;
Here a dropt diadem of orient pearl
The fond impatience of its mistress shows ;
And here the jasmine-bud that deckt the curl,
Lying upon the grass, betrays the amorous girl.

LXIII.

There the coy nymph, too eagerly embraced
By some young lover whom the night makes bold,
Slips from the arm that stealing round her waist
Has forced her, shrinking from its amorous hold,
Her ruffled robe over her breast to fold ;
Then, armed with fragrant powder, she will turn
Where, on high pedestals of gems and gold,
Bright torches with too clear a radiance burn,
To hide the triumph of the love she will not spurn.

LXIV.

There, driven by the ever-moving gale,
The clouds, thy brethren, in an endless train
Around each palace of the city sail ;
Now easy access to the halls they gain,

And mar the painter's art with dewy stain.
But when the traces of their steps they see
They fear within those chambers to remain,
In wreathing clouds of incense seek to flee,
Glide through the lattice bars and once more wander free.

LXV.

Dark is the sky behind thee; but, whene'er
The light wind moves thy sombre veil away,
Again the moon, most excellently fair,
With naught the glory of the light to stay,
Shines on each chamber with a loving ray,
Where beauty, waking from her rapturous dream,
Sees with delight the silver radiance play
On hanging crystals[1] where thy dewdrops gleam,
And feels through all her frame returning vigour stream.

LXVI.

Though Kama, tyrant of the soul, in awe
Of Siva, foe to Love, Kuvera's friend,

[1] "The moon gem, which is supposed to absorb the rays of the moon, and to emit them again in the form of pure and cool moisture." H. H. WILSON.

Forbears in Alaka his bow to draw,[1]
Still mightier arms her merry maidens lend:
What bow so lovely as the brows they bend?
What archer's skill so perfect as the art
Of those bewitching eyes that love to send
The arrows of their glances forth, and dart
Those shafts that never fail, but pierce the lover's heart?

LXVII.

Now close beneath thee thou wilt see my home,
Where, flashing forth, the jewelled archway's glow,
North of my lord Kuvera's royal dome,
With hues of glory mocks the heavenly bow.
There my love's flowers in dazzling beauty blow:
There in the midst the tall Mandara[2] see
Bending the burden of her branches low
To touch her lady's hand: no child might be

[1] "This alludes to the fate which befel the Hindu Cupid upon his assailing Siva, whom, at the desire of the gods, he inflamed with the love of Parvati. Siva, in his wrath, reduced the little deity to ashes, by a flame from the eye in his forehead; and, although he was subsequently restored to animation, he is here supposed to remain in dread of his former enemy." H. H. WILSON.

[2] The Coral-tree, Erythrina Indica.

Nurtured with tenderer care than that her darling tree.[1]

LXVIII.

There girt with emerald steps a bright lake gleams,
Where the gold lotus fires the lily's white:
The swans that sail upon its silver streams
Shall hail thy coming with renewed delight,
And love the cool waves better for the sight
That bids them linger near the pleasant shore,
Without a wish to seek in distant flight
The mountain lake that seemed so dear before,
That lovely mountain lake now scarce remembered more.

LXIX.

Deckt with smooth sapphires, rising from the fount,
A spot beloved by my young bride of old,
Sacred to rest and pleasure, stands a mount,
Which a thick plantain-grove belts round with gold.
E'en now, dark Cloud, as these sad eyes behold
Thy sombre mass girt by thy lightning's sheen,

[1] "If the flowers had been her own children, she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly."
The Sensitive Plant.

They see the spot of which my tongue has told:
Back to my soul comes fresh that glorious scene,
The plantains' circling gold, the hillock's velvet green.

LXX.

Sweet clustering trailers, and each fairest flower
That charms the sense or captivates the eye,
Give grace and odour to my lady's bower.
The bright Asoca and the Kesar vie
For her caresses as my love walks by:
That asks the pressure of her foot,[1] and this,
Wild for the joy for which I vainly sigh,
With me aspiring seeks a higher bliss,
To touch those perfect lips with a long loving kiss.

LXXI.

See, on a pedestal of crystal placed,
A golden column, very tall and fair,
With richest gems, like budding cane-shoots, graced,
Towers o'er the waving trees; and, gleaming there,

[1] "I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet."
The Sensitive Plant.

The blue-necked peacock drinks the evening air;
And when my darling wanders forth alone,
He tries each art to drive away her care,
Dispreads his plumes and dances to the tone
Of the melodious chime made by her tinkling zone.

LXXII.

Led by these tokens thou wilt surely know
The once bright dwelling of my love and me,
When our glad lives were strangers yet to woe:
But altered now that happy spot may be,
Since the stern vengeance of my lord's decree
Has torn me far from all I loved away:
The lotus glories in the sun, but he
Leaves his sad darling at the close of day
To mourn with folded blooms the light that made her gay.

LXXIII.

Gently descending, on that hillock fall,
Not in full glory lest that form of thine
In all its splendour, all its might, appal
My timid lady. Let thy lightning shine

Like sportive fire-flies in a flashing line,
And to thy friendly eyes my darling show.
She stands within her chamber, most divine
Of all the works of God, with rosy glow
Of lips, with teeth of pearl, eyes of the startled roe.

LXXIV.

O, see her silent there, my second life,
Like a poor love-bird mourning for her mate,
My lonely, weeping, miserable wife,
Weeping at early morn, at evening late,
With bitters tears, her banisht husband's fate.
Where hast thou seen a nymph so soft of mould,
So tender, loving, and disconsolate?
Sure the sad lady's spirit dwelt of old
In some frail lotus flower that shrank from rain and cold.

LXXV.

See, on her hand her faded cheek reclines;
Long hanging tresses veil her drooping head;
Bedimmed with tears her eye no longer shines,
And the bright colour of her lip is fled,

For dewy sighs have washed away the red.
Like the cold moon is she, sad, feeble, pale,
When o'er its face thy pall, dark Cloud, is spread,
And all the silver beams, imprisoned, fail
To penetrate the shroud, to pierce the sombre veil.

LXXVI.

Now as the sight of thee renews her woe,
She turns to sacrifice: from her wild eyes,
That picture forth my form, new torrents flow,
To see my mournful wasted image rise.
Then to her favourite bird she sadly cries:
'Dost thou remember, pet, when thou wast free?
And is the mate, with whom, from summer skies
Down sailing, in the well-known roosting tree
'Twas once thy lot to rest, still dearly loved by thee?'

LXXVII.

Or she will touch her lute with careless grace,
And with her low soft voice prepare to sing
Some little ballad of mine ancient race:
But soon the tears that flow from memory's spring

Mar the sweet music of the silver string.
Her thoughts will wander from the cherisht lay,
The notes of triumph will no longer ring,
And her melodious voice will die away
In some wild wailing strain meet for the evil day.

LXXVIII.

Then bravely struggling with her dark despair,
She turns away, and fondly numbers o'er
The faded garlands which her pious care
Twines every month that comes, above the door;
Counts to the happy day that will restore
Her husband; and the thought, so passing sweet,
Brings light and rapture to her eye once more;
Her bosom swells, her pulses wildly beat,
And fancy hears the step of my returning feet.

LXXIX.

These cares by day assuage the mourner's grief,
But Ah! the night brings only woe and pain;
Be this the season for my love's relief;
Till then, dear Cloud, thy soothing voice restrain,

And give thine aid when other help is vain.
When all is dark and still float softly near
The lattice of her chamber, and remain
To breathe thy message in her sleepless ear,
And in the weary night my widowed darling cheer.

LXXX.

Then on her lonely couch, thin, anguish-worn,
Watching and weeping still she sadly lies,
Pale as the waning moon that flies the morn
When first the sunbeams fire the eastern skies.
She slowly counts 'mid tears and deep-drawn sighs
The long long weary hours that used to be
Like moments, praying that the sun may rise
To chase the lingering night that wont to flee
Like a quick flash of joy when it was past with me.

LXXXI.

But should my love her weary eyelids close,
Lulled by sweet thoughts and many a hopeful sign,
Let not thy thunder break her soft repose,
Nor sudden bid her wreathing arms untwine

Lest in her dreams they should be clasping mine:
Still let such dreams her aching bosom bless:
Then, when the sunbeams on her lattice shine,
With thy deep-sounding words the dame address,
And thus my longing love and tender hope express:

LXXXII.

'O lonely mourner, from thy lord I speed,
And to his distant home fond greetings bear.
'Tis mine the exile's weary steps to lead
In safety back to soothe his bride's despair:
'Tis mine, with thunder rolling through the air,
To wake the sigh for all he left behind,
The well-loved cot and wife still weeping there;
And urge his trembling fingers to unbind
The mourner's braid of hair for his long absence twined.

LXXXIII.

Thy faithful lord on Rama's wood-crowned hill
Mourns the sad lot that severs him from thee;
And in fond fancy he is with thee still
Though far away by hostile fate's decree.

Wasted with woe, he seems thy form to see
Worn, like his own, with tears that ever roll
From orbs that with his weeping eyes agree:
He feels the longing of thy kindred soul,
And counts thy sighs in those his breast can ne'er control.

LXXXIV.

He bids me now his loving message speak,
For far is he from all he holds most dear;
But O, what joy, might he but touch thy cheek
And softly whisper thus into thine ear:
'O peerless creature, in my prison here
Signs of thy beauty meet me every hour:
I see the graces of thy form appear
Faintly reflected in each fairest flower
That twines her tender shoots around my lonely bower.

LXXXV.

When from my path the startled roedeer run,
Their eyes, sweet love, thy gentle glance recall:
The peacock's glories, gleaming in the sun,
Show like thy tresses glittering as they fall:

I see thine arching eyebrow in the small
Ripple upon the brook: the moon, Ah me!
Brings back thy pure pale cheek: in these, in all
The fairest sights that nature boasts, I see
Faint emblems of the charms that meet in none but thee.

LXXXVI.

Oft my love-guided hand essays to paint
Thy portrait on the rock with mineral dyes;
And soon as fancy fondly sees a faint
Resemblance of thy well-loved face arise,
I fall upon the ground with eager cries
Of transport: but e'en here an envious veil
Fate interposes, and the vision flies;
Gone is the form I wildly thought to hail,
And dim with blinding tears my loving glances fail.

LXXXVII.

The spirits of the grove, believe me, weep
As I lie tossing on my lonely bed;
Their pearly tears steal gently down, and steep
The green leaves that o'ercanopy my head,

As, in a dream of thee, they watch me spread
My arms, enlacing in their eager strain
Naught but the yielding air of night instead
Of that delicious form they would detain :
Then see me start and sigh and wake to woe again.

LXXXVIII.

A welcome herald from my darling comes
The breeze that from the snowy mountain springs,
Loaded with fragrance from the oozing gums
Of pine-buds rifled by its balmy wings:
To me it whispers such delicious things,
For it may be its breath has fondly played
Over my lady's bosom, whence it brings
Diviner fragrance, tenderly has laid
A kiss upon her lips, and fanned her in the shade.

LXXXIX.

But yield not, love, to dark despair, nor think
That changeless, never ending, is our doom,
Or in the strife thy gentle soul will sink :
Some friendly stars the moonless night illume,

Some flowers of hope amid the desert bloom:
Life has no perfect good, no endless ill,
No constant brightness, no perpetual gloom;
But circling as a wheel, and never still,
Now down, and now above, all must their fate fulfil.

XC.

Four months remain, and when that age is fled,
Then ends my banishment and all our pain:
When Vishnu rises from his serpent bed[1]
Where lapt in sleep the Bow-armed God has lain,
Thy lover speeds to home and thee again:
The moon of autumn with serener glow
His silver inflnence on our nights shall rain,
And our rapt souls with joy shall overflow
More exquisitely sweet for all remembered woe.

[1] "The serpent couch is the great snake Ananta, upon which Vishnu, or, as he is here called, the Holder of the bow Sarnga (the horn-bow), reclines, during four months, from the 11th of Asharha to the 11th of Kartik; or, as it has occurred in 1813, from the 23rd of June to the 26th of October. The sleep of Vishnu, during the four months of the periodical rains in Hindustan, seems to bear an emblematical relation to that season. It has been compared to the Egyptian hieroglyphical account of the sleep of Horus, typical of the annual overflow of the Nile, by the late Mr. Paterson, in his ingenious Essay on the Origin of the Hindu Religion. Asiatic Researches, vol. viii." H. H. Wilson.

XCI.

Once more I see thee, but no more alone,
Thy senses steept in dews of slumber, lie,
With thy fond arms around thy husband thrown.
Thou startest weeping, and I ask thee why
Thy soul is troubled when thy lord is nigh.
'Traitor,' thou sayest, as a smile and tear
Plays on thy lip and glistens in thine eye,
'Faithless I saw thee in my dream appear,
Whispering tales of love into another's ear.'

XCII.

'But, dark-eyed beauty, rest thou ever sure
That, with a constancy that naught shall bend,
Through woe and absence shall my faith endure.
To slanderous tales forbear thine ear to lend:
Store in thy heart the message which I send,
And soothe thee with the trust that love like mine
Will live unchanging on till time shall end;
Burn with a flame that ne'er shall know decline,
But, fed with hope, each day shall yet more brightly shine.'

XCIII.

'Wilt thou, dear Cloud, through regions far away,
This loving message to my darling bear?
Silent art thou, yet not in vain I pray;
For when the Rain-birds, in the sultry air,
Crave the cool shower of thee, thou dost not care
To speak in answer, but sweet drops descend
And their faint strength and flagging wings repair:
So comes the aid the good delight to lend,
Deeming the granted wish best answer to a friend.

XCIV.

Thus, faithful herald, having cheered her heart
Who mourns in joyless solitude her fate,
From the high forehead of that hill depart
Where the celestial Bull, who bears the weight
Of Siva, rends the rock with joy elate:
Return to me, and let my spirit know
Some comfort, hearing of my darling's state,
Ere my soul sink beneath its weight of woe
Like a frail jasmine-bud scorcht by the summer's glow.

XCV.

So shall my thanks repay thy gentle deed,
And evermore my blessings follow thee:
So by the breezes wafted, shalt thou speed
To pleasant regions where thou fain wouldst be,
There rest delighted or there wander free;
May the sweet rain ne'er fail thee; and thy bride,
The splendid lightning, mayst thou ever see
Close to thyself in dazzling beauty ride,
Flashing upon thy breast or sporting at thy side.'

XCVI.

The mourner ceased; the airy envoy heard;
And the fond speech, by love made eloquent,
Kuvera's breast with soft compassion stirred.
His ear in mercy to the tale he bent
That led his yielding spirit to relent,
And made him, ere the term was nigh, restore
The exile languishing in banishment,
And freely bade him, all his trials o'er,
Live with his love again with joy for evermore.

THE SUPPLIANT DOVE.

Chased by a hawk, there came a dove
With worn and weary wing,
And took her stand upon the hand
Of Kasi's noble king.
The monarch smoothed her ruffled plumes
And laid her on his breast;
And cried, 'No fear shall vex thee here,
Rest, pretty egg-born, rest!
Fair Kasi's realm is rich and wide,
With golden harvests gay,
But all that's mine will I resign
Ere I my guest betray.'

[1] Benares.

But, panting for his half-won spoil,
The hawk was close behind,
And with wild eye and eager cry
Came swooping down the wind:
'This bird,' he cried, 'my destined prize,
'Tis not for thee to shield:
'Tis mine by right and toilsome flight
O'er hill and dale and field.
Hunger and thirst oppress me sore,
And I am faint with toil:
Thou shouldst not stay a bird of prey
Who claims his rightful spoil.
They say thou art a glorious king,
And justice is thy care:
Then justly reign in thy domain,
Nor rob the birds of air.'
Then cried the king: 'A cow[1] or deer
For thee shall straightway bleed,
Or let a ram or tender lamb
Be slain, for thee to feed.

[1] I have retained the cow at the risk of hurting the feelings of some sensitive Hindus. This apologue was composed before the cow was sacrosanct.

Mine oath forbids me to betray
My little twice-born guest:
See, how she clings, with trembling wings,
To her protector's breast.'
'No flesh of lambs,' the hawk replied,
'No blood of deer for me;
The falcon loves to feed on doves,
And such is Heaven's decree.
But if affection for the dove
Thy pitying heart has stirred,
Let thine own flesh my maw refresh,
Weighed down against the bird.'
He carved the flesh from off his side,
And threw it in the scale,
While women's cries smote on the skies
With loud lament and wail.
He hacked the flesh from side and arm,
From chest and back and thigh,
But still above the little dove
The monarch's scale stood high.
He heaped the scale with piles of flesh,
With sinews, blood, and skin,

And when alone was left him bone
He threw himself therein.
Then thundered voices through the air;
The sky grew black as night;
And fever took the earth that shook
To see that wondrous sight.
The blessed Gods, from every sphere,
By Indra led, came nigh;
While drum and flute and shell and lute
Made music in the sky.
They rained immortal chaplets down,
Which hands celestial twine,
And softly shed upon his head
Pure Amrit, drink divine.
Then God and Seraph, Bard and Nymph
Their heavenly voices raised,
And a glad throng with dance and song
The glorious monarch praised.
They set him on a golden car
That blazed with many a gem;
Then swiftly through the air they flew,
And bore him home with them.

Thus Kasi's lord, by noble deed,
  Won Heaven and deathless fame;
And when the weak protection seek
  From thee, do thou the same.

Mahabharat.

THE DESCENT OF GANGA.

He stood upon the lofty crest
  That crowns the Lord of Snow,
And bade the river of the Blest
  Descend on earth below.
Himalaya's child, adored of all,
  The haughty mandate heard,
And her proud bosom at the call
  With furious wrath was stirred.
Down from her channel in the skies
  With awful might she sped,
In a giant's rush, in a giant's size,
  On Siva's holy head.

'He calls me,' in her wrath she cried,
'And all my flood shall sweep
And whirl him in its whelming tide
To hell's profoundest deep.'
He held the river on his head,
And kept her wandering, where,
Dense as Himalaya's woods, were spread
The tangles of his hair.
No way to earth she found, ashamed,
Though long and sore she strove,
Condemned, until her pride were tamed,
Amid his locks to rove.
At length when many a year had past
He bade her wanderings end;
Bade the delighted flood at last
Upon the earth descend.
With deafening roar upon the rock
Down sped the heavenly tide,
And earth, who trembled at the shock,
With hollow voice replied.
On countless glittering scales the beam
Of rosy morning flashed,

Where fish and dolphins in the stream,
Fallen and falling, dashed.
Then Bards who chant celestial lays,
And Nymphs of heavenly birth,
Flocked round upon the flood to gaze
That streamed from sky to earth.
The Gods themselves from every sphere,
Incomparably bright,
Borne in their golden cars drew near
To see the wondrous sight.
The cloudless sky was all aflame
With the light of a hundred suns,
Where'er the shining chariots came
That bore those holy ones.
So flashed the air with crested snakes
And fish of every hue,
As when the lightning's glory breaks
Through fields of summer blue.
And white foam-clouds and silver spray
Were wildly tossed on high,
Like swans that urge their homeward way
Across the autumn sky.

Now flowed the river calm and clear
With current deep and strong,
Now slowly broadened to a mere,
Or scarcely moved along.
Now o'er a length of sandy plain
Her tranquil course she held:
Now rose her waves and sank again
By refluent waves repelled.

TARA'S LAMENT.

Tara, widowed of her spouse,
Kissed him on the cheek and brows;
O'er her fallen hero bent,
Called him with this wild lament:
'Still, my lord, without reply?
Is the earth more loved than I,
That thou choosest to recline
On her breast, forsaking mine?
Lord and keeper, good and brave,
Sage to guide and strong to save,
See, thy chiefs, a mournful ring,
Wait around their silent king.

Wilt thou still be stern and mute?
Must they miss thy kind salute?
Dearest, when the morning's red
Calls thee from thy royal bed,
'Tis thy wont to welcome each
With a gift or pleasant speech.
Must thy lords unheeded stay?
Will thou not arise to-day?
Wilt thou not awake from sleep
While thy friends around thee weep?
Look, thy child before thee stands;
Lifts to thee his little hands.
Wilt thou, silent yet, despise
That appeal of wistful eyes?

Ah! my love is dead, is dead.
Look ye, how his wounds have bled;
How the crimson torrents make
Round his limbs a rising lake.
Death, my child, has hurried hence
Him who was our sure defence.
Come, and look on him who thus

Slain in fight has gone from us.
Kiss thy sire and say farewell!'

Came the little child and fell
On his knees and fondly pressed
Those cold feet with arm and breast:
'Here is Angada,' he cried;
'Father, speak!' but none replied.

Weeping, as her child she viewed,
Tara thus her plaint renewed:
'Hast thou not a word—not one—
Father, for thy darling son?
Canst thou still and silent lie,
Hear him call, and not reply?
Husband, by thy bloody bed
Thus I sit and mourn thee dead;
Like some mother of the herd,
By the lion undeterred,
Mourning in the grassy dell
Where her lord and leader fell.'

TRUE GLORY.

To whom is glory justly due ?
To those who pride and hate subdue ;
Who, 'mid the joys that lure the sense,
Lead lives of holy abstinence ;
Who, when reviled, their tongues restrain,
And, injured, injure not again ;
Who ask of none, but freely give
Most liberal to all that live ;
Who toil unresting through the day,
Their parents' joy and hope and stay ;
Who welcome to their homes the guest,
And banish envy from their breast ;
With reverent study love to pore
On precepts of our sacred lore ;
Who work not, speak not, think not sin,
In body pure and pure within ;
Whom avarice can ne'er mislead

To guilty thought or sinful deed;
Whose fancy never seeks to roam
From the dear wives who cheer their home;
Whose hero souls cast fear away
When battling in a rightful fray;
Who speak the truth with dying breath
Undaunted by approaching death,
Their lives illumed with beacon light
To guide their brothers' steps aright;
Who loving all, to all endeared,
Fearless of all by none are feared;
To whom the world with all therein,
Dear as themselves, is more than kin;
Who yield to others, wisely meek,
The honours which they scorn to seek;
Who toil that rage and hate may cease,
And lure embittered foes to peace;
Who serve their God, the laws obey,
And earnest, faithful, work and pray;
To these, the bounteous, pure, and true,
Is highest glory justly due.

Mahabharat.

INGRATITUDE.

O Monarch, hear with mind and ear
The words that Brahma spake:
'The thankless man lives under ban;
Who will, his life may take:
Man for all sin may pardon win,
How deep soe'er the guilt;
Yea, for the stain of Brahman slain,
Whose blood must ne'er be spilt.
Slave to the bowl that kills the soul,
He turns and gains relief;
The liar yet may pardon get,
The perjured, and the thief.

But never can the thankless man
    Be pardoned for his crime:
Disgrace and shame shall hunt his name
    Through life and endless time.
When, reft of friends, his days he ends
    In profitless remorse,
E'en beasts of prey shall turn away
    And scorn his loathed corpse.'

FEED THE POOR.

If thou would win the dear reward
Which only virtue earns,
Waste not thy wealth upon the lord
Who gift for gift returns.
Not with the rich thy treasures share;
Give aid to those who need;
And, with the gold thy wants can spare,
The poor and hungry feed.
Be sure that those who would receive
Deserve and crave thy care;
And ponder, ere thy hands relieve,
The how, and when, and where.

THE WISE SCHOLAR.

I hold that scholar truly wise
Who schools his heart and lips and eyes:
Who can as worthless clay behold
The treasures of another's gold:
Who looks upon his neighbour's wife
As upon her who gave him life:
Who feels as for himself for all
That live on earth, both great and small.

THE END.

BY THE SAME

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